

HUMAN RELATIONS

A Game Plan for Improving Personal Adjustment

FIFTH EDITION



LOREN FORD | JUDITH ARTER

Human Relations

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Fifth Edition

Human Relations

A GAME PLAN FOR IMPROVING PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

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PREFACE

In thinking about how to introduce this edition of the book, I recalled an amusing story from the first time the book was published. After I had been working for a while with the company, I asked the editor why they had chosen this book. The response was that they had assigned the top three books being reviewed to the psychology editor, who took them home to read in the evening to make a decision. The next day the editor reported that my book was the only one that didn't put her to sleep.

It has been more than 20 years since I first started work on this book. My initial effort was in many ways motivated by my desire to “walk the talk” and take on a personal challenge. In my course on human relations, I frequently ask students to expand their comfort zone and consider learning new behavior. I have always enjoyed telling stories and interacting with students in the classroom. Writing, though, was not an activity that I had a strong attraction to. However, it represented an opportunity to take a risk, stretch my abilities, and gain self-discipline in the process. This book represents an area of growth for me.

My students were the ones who encouraged me to write down my stories and lectures. Over the years, I have continued to receive feedback that they think it is an interesting book and that they often pass it on to family and friends. It was my goal originally to provide a text that would reach out and grab people and get them intrigued with the possibilities and benefits of personal exploration. I continue to take it as a compliment that many students say that this is one of the books they are going to keep at the end of the term.

With that encouragement, I am excited to be offering this fifth edition of *Human Relations: A Game Plan for Improving Personal Adjustment*. Although there have been some changes to the order of the content and new concepts added, the emphasis and focus of the book remain the same. While providing the academic subjects that are necessary for a greater understanding of human relations, the content is presented, as much as possible, in an informal and personal manner. It is important to learn how current research applies to human interactions, yet most of us are concerned with how that research will improve the quality of our lives and lead to more satisfying relations with the people we care about and are close to.

My intent is to make learning about and improving human relations enjoyable, yet there is also the reality that part of the journey of self-exploration requires presenting and dealing with concepts that include the more serious and significant aspects of life. This book offers the opportunity to look at some of the areas of life where self-examination and assessment of needed changes may not always be easy. I try to balance that seriousness by maintaining a sense of humor. People often learn best when

theory is combined with stories, examples, and humorous anecdotes from everyday life. Many people in the field of mental health believe that being well balanced means keeping things in perspective. As you explore the information offered, I hope you will keep the following in mind: *Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves, for they shall never cease to be amused.*

There is always the temptation to include as much academic research and theory as possible, but I feel it is important to balance that with the expectations and needs of the students. I have sat through enough psychology classes to know what it is like to have an instructor teach a course on human behavior as if there were no human beings in the classroom. Therefore, I have tried to balance relevant research and theoretical concepts with interesting anecdotes, case studies, and opportunities to actively engage students.

And it is my students who have given me the opportunity to continue to grow and change. *Human Relations* is my attempt to remind myself what it is that I know and yet sometimes forget. We all can use reminders, at times, of the lessons that we need to learn—and relearn. It is my students and this course that remind me often, “We teach best what we most need to learn.”

REVISIONS FROM THE FOURTH EDITION

The Fifth Edition keeps all the features of the Fourth Edition while updating references, adding content that is currently important, tightening up the writing, and adding some features that enhance learning. The book has been expanded from 10 to 11 chapters because of requests from users to include more information from the area of social psychology. The book is organized so that instructors can use 10 chapters if they desire; some instructors choose to leave the topic of human sexuality to the course that covers that topic in depth.

The Fifth Edition explicitly aligns learning outcomes/objectives for students with instructional ideas/strategies and assessment. For the knowledge learning objectives, this involves listing the most important information from each chapter, supplying students with a study guide, providing instructional activities that clarify and expand major ideas, and linking test items to learning objectives. For the reasoning and communication learning objectives, alignment involves explicit practice with **Journal Rubrics** that define sound reasoning and communication in this course, and use of these rubrics as part of the final grade. Suggestions for using assessment as instruction come from the current extensive research literature on formative assessment.

The *Reaction and Response* questions at the end of each chapter were formerly called Levels I, II, and III. They have been condensed into two categories of questions and

renamed (1) *What and Why* and (2) *When, Where, and How*. The former asks students to think about what they have learned and why it is important. The latter asks students to think about where, when, and how the information might be useful and how it would apply to themselves.

The Fifth Edition significantly updates and expands ancillary materials for the instructor. Updates reflect the expertise of the new co-author. Ancillary materials will be described later in this section, after a chapter-by-chapter list of changes.

Chapter-by-Chapter Changes

PART I: LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF The title has been changed to better describe the content. The chapter on emotions has been moved to Part I from Part II to better reflect the theme of this Part.

Chapter 1: Basic Principles and Communication

Additions/Revisions:

- Assertiveness moved here from Chapter 3 because of its connection to shyness and communication
- Impact of the Internet on communication added
- Research on multitasking added
- Updated information on demographics based on the 2010 census

Deletions:

- The section on how to learn from the materials moved to the *Introduction* because students need certain information before beginning to read the chapters

Chapter 2: Self-Awareness

Additions/Revisions:

- Latest studies on the importance of self-concept added

Chapter 3: Personality and Comfort Zones

Additions/Revisions:

- Reorganized and expanded content with an emphasis on personality theory
- Communication between those with different personality styles emphasized

Deletions:

- Assertiveness moved to Chapter 1 in order to introduce the concept in connection with communication
- Attribution theory moved to the new Chapter 6, *Social Influence and Group Behavior*

Chapter 4: Emotions and Stress Management

Additions/Revisions:

- Neuroscience of emotions added
- Stress Management moved to this chapter because of the reciprocal relationship between how one handles emotions and how one handles stress

- Chapters 4 and 5 from the Fourth Edition reversed because the manner in which Parts I and II relate to each other is revised; in this edition, Part I focuses on the individual while Part II focuses more on interactions with others and behavior in groups

PART II: LEARNING ABOUT INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

The theme of Part II is the same as in the Fourth Edition; the title has been revised to better reflect the theme. As described above, the chapter on families in the previous edition was switched with the chapter on emotions to better fit in with the themes of their respective Parts.

Chapter 5: Family Influences

Additions/Revisions:

- 2010 census information added
- Updated information on parenting and dysfunctional families
- Updated statistics on abuse

Chapter 6: Social Influence and Group Behavior

Chapter 6 is a new chapter. It consolidates new material with attribution theory from Chapter 3 of the Fourth Edition. The chapter was added because of the importance of new research in the field of social neuroscience, which indicates that we are hardwired for social interactions. New features include:

- Social perceptions and cognitions
- Conformity, altruism, and pro-social behavior
- Causes and sources of prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination
- Social neuroscience

Chapter 7: Developing Close Relationships

Additions/Revisions:

- Neuroscience of attraction added
- Adjustment to separation and divorce added
- Internet dating added
- Making long-term commitments added

Chapter 8: Human Sexuality

Additions/Revisions:

- Latest information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), AIDS, rape, abuse added
- Cyberspace and sexuality added
- Sections on pornography and Internet addiction added

PART III: LEARNING ABOUT ADJUSTMENT IN LIFE Chapter themes in Part III have remained the same, but topics have been reorganized somewhat to improve the grouping of content.

Chapter 9: Health, Wellness, and Coping Skills

Additions/Revisions:

- Health, wellness, and lifestyle discussions moved from the section on life span development and life changes in the previous edition

- Latest statistics on obesity added
- Neuroscience of obesity added
- Psychological disorders and therapeutic approaches added

Deletions:

- Components of change and a model for change moved to Chapter 11 to build on positive psychology and life satisfaction

Chapter 10: Life span Development and Transitions

Additions/Revisions:

- Work and leisure moved to this chapter from previous Chapter 10
- Career development and job satisfaction added

Deletions:

- Health, wellness, and lifestyle moved to Chapter 9

Chapter 11: Positive Living and Life Satisfaction

Additions/Revisions:

- New section on positive psychology added because of its recent increasing importance
- Section on happiness, joy, and excitement moved here to be with positive psychology and life satisfaction

Deletions:

- The section on work and leisure moved to Chapter 10

Ancillary Materials

An *Instructor's Manual* is available at www.pearson-highered.com/irc. The *Instructor's Manual* includes the following:

1. Suggestions for the 10–20 most important knowledge outcomes for each chapter and study guides for these knowledge outcomes that can be copied for students.
2. An item bank that covers these knowledge outcomes. (Many of the items have been pilot-tested.) Each item is cross-referenced to the knowledge learning objectives so that various versions of quizzes and tests can be developed to explicitly cover the desired learning objectives. These items can be used in various ways by instructors, including ungraded practice (formative assessment) or midterms and finals (summative assessment). There are suggestions for how to select items to match the importance of each learning outcome during instruction and assistance on how students can use the items and results of the assessments to self-assess and set goals for further learning (formative assessment).
3. Assistance with how to assess student understanding and application of the concept of *constructs*.

4. Pilot-tested rubrics for the learning objectives of oral communication and reasoning.
 - a. The major reasoning objective is application of psychological information to one's own context. Students practice this proficiency by responding to the *Review and Response* questions at the end of each chapter or by analyzing their reactions to class activities. The *Instructor's Manual* includes samples of strong, medium, and weak *Review and Response* journal entries from students. We provide instructional suggestions for how to use these samples and the rubric with students to improve their ability to apply information to themselves (formative assessment).
 - b. The oral communication learning outcome is effective group discussion. There is a rubric that defines what good group discussion looks like. Since this learning outcome tends to be more familiar to students than the reasoning outcomes, instructional strategies for using this rubric with students are somewhat different than for the reasoning rubric.
5. Instructional suggestions (activities) for making sure that the most important material is covered during class time. Activities will include PowerPoint slides, presenter suggestions, and typical student responses.
6. Help with online resources for expanding on various topics: current articles or research; relevant videos and DVDs; self-analysis inventories that students can take to, for example, analyze their personality.
7. A short review of the research on the impact of good formative assessment (assessment for learning) on student learning and motivation as the rationale and context for our various suggestions above.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of the instructors, trainers, and supervisors I have studied with over the past 35 years and the researchers who continually provide a more solid scientific foundation for the examination of human behavior. Much of the material presented in this book is a compilation and expansion of ideas from these sources. Thank you, in general, to all who have assisted me in my own growth as a counselor and educator.

I am indebted to my students who have had the courage to share so much of themselves during the process of personal growth in my courses. Classroom interactions have given me endless opportunities to learn and evolve as an instructor.

I appreciate the suggestions for the Fifth Edition provided by those instructors and professors who reviewed the Fourth Edition:

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES OF A HUMAN RELATIONS COURSE

A human relations course should teach practical skills for dealing with everyday situations. There are several things I want you to know and be able to do as the result of interacting with the material in this book. First, I want you to *learn a substantial amount of information*. I'm not asking you to learn this material just to learn it, but because the more you understand about what makes humans act the way they do, the more you can make your interactions with others fruitful and satisfying.

Although covering a broad range of topics is an ambitious task, I think it is important to address as many pertinent topics as possible in an introductory course. This gives students and instructors flexibility in deciding which subjects to pursue in greater depth. Most human relations texts cover the areas of communication, self-concept, assertiveness, stress and conflict management, and emotions, but it is also useful to include such topics as personality, family relations, parenting, sexuality, attachment styles, guilt, critical thinking, coping skills, and psychological disorders. This edition also includes new sections that incorporate material on positive psychology, social neuroscience, social psychology and group influence, living with uncertainty, and the impact of technology and the Internet on social interactions.

Secondly, and possibly more importantly than merely learning information, I want you to be able to *apply the information in the course to your own personal situation*. I don't leave this up to chance—practice makes perfect. Therefore, I will ask you to practice two things: communicating with others and thinking through how various theories and ideas might play out in your own life.

Finally, there is one overarching concept I especially want you to understand: What a **construct** is. In this course you'll be reading about theories of human behavior. You'll be hearing about, for example, "personality types," or "aspects of self-concept," or "attachment styles." What's important to remember about all these classification schemes is that some human made them up to help explain and talk about complex human behavior. They are "constructs," meaning that a person "constructed" them based on his or her observation of how people act. A good construct is not just made up out of thin air; it is based on research. A construct is useful only to the extent that it can reliably predict behavior and can help people make positive changes in their lives. Therefore, the more evidence there is that a construct predicts behavior and can help people, the more likely it is that it will stick around.

There will be lots of competing theories of human behavior you'll be reading about in this course. They are all constructs, developed based on different interpretations

of what is observed. I have only included theories that are based on evidence. But, because behavior is so complicated, there are always gray areas: theories and constructs that are better or worse at explaining a behavior. As you go through the book, you might find yourself saying, "I thought I was just beginning to understand Dr X's classification scheme for personality, and now you're telling me about Dr Y's. Which is right?" The answer is "neither" and "both." Until additional research evidence comes in, both have elements of usefulness. So, instead of getting confused by the various alternative constructs, use them to reinforce the notion that human behavior is very complex and not easily pigeon-holed.

INSTRUCTIONAL FEATURES OF THE TEXT

There are several features of the text designed to assist you to learn needed material, practice communication skills, and practice applying information to your own life.

Each chapter begins with a list of the most important information to be learned. (The *Instructor's Manual* includes study sheets for these major learning objectives.) Each chapter ends with a summary of the *big ideas* (the most important concepts to remember five years from now), a chapter review, and Internet resources for additional information. This is followed by a *Reaction and Response* section that gives you the opportunity to apply the information from the text to personal situations. The questions are divided into two types. The first type of *Reaction and Response* questions, called *What and Why*, are intended to help you consolidate the understanding of the material and why it is important to know it. The second type of questions, called *When, Where, and How*, are intended to give you the opportunity to explain and give specific examples of how you might apply and act on the information in your own lives.

To further encourage active learning, I've included question-and-answer sections throughout each chapter called *Thought Questions*. These stopping points offer another opportunity to apply the information being presented. They are useful in organizing thoughts and taking mental notes that can be used for answering the *Reaction and Response* questions at the end of the chapter.

I'm also including written criteria (called rubrics) that define (1) what good communication looks like in this course and (2) what it looks like when readers are doing a meaningful job of answering the *Reaction and Response* questions. Readers have an easier time communicating and applying information well when they know exactly what to do. The rubrics are intended to make expectations as clear as possible. (The rubrics are presented in Chapter 1 and samples of strong, medium, and weak *Reaction and Response* answers are included in the *Instructor's Manual*.)

In addition to big ideas, learning objectives, summaries, questions, and rubrics, various feature articles, poems, student stories, case studies, and anecdotes are included to help you understand the ideas presented.

LEARNING FROM THESE MATERIALS

How you approach this course reflects how you approach all else you do in life. Do you do the minimum to get by? Do you avoid commitments, or, just as problematic, over-commit yourself? Do you set goals you don't work toward or that are impossible to attain? Studying human relations can be more than an intellectual exercise about what causes others to act as they do. Getting the most from this course involves deep consideration of where you are now, where you want to be in the world, and how you can attain what you want. In this part of the introduction, I present some ideas that will influence how much you gain from this course.

Making Commitments

Has anyone ever told you he or she was going to do something for you and then backed out without letting you know? How did you feel? How did you respond? You undoubtedly had some negative thoughts, including some expletives and rather colorful adjectives about the person. When someone disappoints us, we usually express some form of disapproval. Trying to avoid disapproval is what motivates many of us to keep our commitments to others.

What percentage of the time do you keep commitments to other people? Is it fairly high? If you are like most students you responded in the neighborhood of 90 percent. Now we are going to use that line of reasoning but take another perspective. What percentage of the time do you keep commitments to yourself? For most students, the answer is about 50 percent.

Every term, I hear students say, "This is the term I'm going to go to all my classes," or "I'm going to finish all the units I start." Many of us have a "New Year's Resolutions" approach to life, in which we make all kinds of promises to ourselves but never fulfill them.

Be very careful about the commitments you make to yourself. What you think of yourself is just as important as what someone else thinks of you. It is interesting that we will go to great lengths, in most cases, to avoid others' disapproval. Yet, when it comes to our view of ourselves, we act as if what we think of our own dependability is irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who frequently make and then break agreements with themselves might benefit from reading that statement again: *We keep commitments to others to avoid disapproval. Approval from yourself is just as important as, or more important than, approval from others.*

There is another aspect of being careful about the commitments you make. There are people who make too many commitments, and keep them at whatever cost. Then others take advantage of them, knowing that they

find it difficult to say no and that, once committed, they will do the job no matter what.

Those who break agreements easily need to start keeping them! On the other hand, those who sacrifice too much to others need to give a higher priority to keeping commitments they have made to themselves. For them, it might be beneficial to say no. Generally, a useful guideline is to *make fewer commitments and keep them.*

There are a number of variables affecting self-esteem, but one sure way to increase your self-esteem is to know that you can count on yourself to stick with a decision. Life can be seen, at times, as a series of accomplishments. Self-esteem increases as you learn and grow from accomplishments, and you are more likely to achieve goals when you determine your priorities and stick with your commitments to attain them.

One of these accomplishments could be what you do in this course. What is your intention? What are you willing to commit to? You can glide through or you can really try to get something out of it. I might not know the difference. Only you will.

One accomplishment that could come from this class would be the commitment to develop greater honesty with yourself and others about what you truly will or will not do. Being honest with yourself and others is an important part of human relations.

There are several ways that people fool themselves regarding being honest with themselves and others. First, most people say that they would rather hear the truth than a lie. Yet, how many times have you answered "yes" to a request even as a voice in your head was screaming, "there's no way I'm going to do it"? This is the *first level of self-deceit*. We tell ourselves that we want the truth, but that others, well, they would rather have the lie.

The *second level of self-deceit* is evident in the belief that we have a good nonsense detector but that others don't. Have you ever felt a little insulted when someone told you an obvious lie? The double standard comes into play when you tell others the same type of obvious lie, believing they will accept it as truth. Most of us, at some time, have given a lame excuse that was transparent. I hear them all the time from students when I'm teaching this course.

The *third level of self-deceit* is the excuse we use for being less than honest with someone else in the first place. We tell ourselves that we do it to spare other people's feelings. The reality is that we do it to protect ourselves by avoiding other people's disapproval. But it doesn't work that way. If Joe tells Sam he can't help him move because he will be out of town, what happens when they run into each other at the store? If you risk saying no when you need to, you may face some disapproval at that time. But, in the long run, if you tell the truth, you will usually earn some respect from that person for being honest. The other person will learn that you can be counted on when you do say yes. Remember: If you never say "no," what does "yes" really mean?

Setting Goals

This leads us into setting personal goals for this course. Goals are important because by setting some you can achieve more, improve your performance, and help to motivate yourself. Goals are also an important means for improving your self-confidence and increasing your satisfaction with your achievements (Corey and Corey, 2006).

Some people don't want to set goals because they don't like the process of making known their desires either to themselves or to others. They prefer to act as if they don't have any plans. That way, if they don't accomplish anything in life, it won't seem like failure. The problem with that kind of thinking is that everyone has aspirations. Whether or not we let ourselves in on it, we all have hopes for the kind of life we would like to live.

There is an old saying: "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else." Ask yourself where you would like to be 5, 10, or 20 years from now. What do you want to accomplish in the world regarding education, career, and family? Use the following guidelines to develop goals for this course that will help you achieve your long-term goals.

EFFECTIVE GOAL SETTING

1. **Base your goals on personal performance or skills or knowledge to be acquired:** This enables you to keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.
2. **Set goals you can realistically attain:** If your goal is too high, it almost guarantees that it is unattainable. (Some people who are concerned about taking risks and want an excuse to play it safe may use high goals as a chance to tell themselves, "I told you so.") If your goal is too low then you are extremely unlikely to achieve anything of real worth. Strive for balance: Goals that are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them.
3. **Keep your goals small and operational:** If you have a large or long-term goal, it is important to be able to notice incremental changes. This also provides more opportunities to reward progress.
4. **State the goal in a positive manner:** What you want to do or accomplish, rather than what you don't want to have happen.
5. **Be precise and specific:** Make sure that achievement can be measured. What constitutes progress, and what are the target dates and/or times?
6. **Prioritize:** It will be much easier to get organized and work toward a goal if you first prioritize. This can give you direction and provide motivation.
7. **Write your goals down:** It is amazing how powerful it can be to take something out of your mind and put it down on paper. When you can see it and read it, the goal takes on a new dimension.

*"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough,
they are yours."*

Richard Bach

If you revise your list of goals on a regular basis, you can greatly increase your accomplishments in life. And, it follows that achieving the things that you want in life will contribute to your overall happiness and satisfaction.

Thinking Critically

An important part of being able to assimilate new information is learning the tools to evaluate the worth of the information being presented. Some people accept things at face value and don't question information, behavior or events enough. They put too much value on "common-sense" explanations, even though there are times when something that seems obvious is not actually an explanation for the event. An example comes from James Randi, a famous debunker of the paranormal, who organized an Australian tour by the fake psychic "Carlos." Carlos demonstrated his psychic abilities to adoring and uncritical audiences. The catch was that every "psychic" phenomenon was actually a trick. When Randi revealed the hoax, many people wouldn't believe it. They maintained that he was lying about the hoax because, after all, only real psychics could perform such miracles (downloaded from <<http://www.paranormal-encyclopedia.com/t/true-believer-syndrome>> April 3, 2011.)

Another example is the recent die-off of birds in Arkansas (Lee Bergquist, *Journal Sentinel*, Jan 6, 2011). When 5,000 red-winged black-birds were found dead in the streets after New Year's Eve, 2010, wild rumors spread about the cause—military tests, pesticides, or the spread of a deadly new disease. Biologists who examined the birds found no evidence of disease, but lots of blunt-force trauma. They speculated that, since black-birds don't fly very well in the dark, the extensive fireworks on New Year's eve startled the birds (who often travel in flocks of 100,000), and when they started to fly, they ran into things. Witnesses reported seeing the birds crashing into buildings and other obstacles. Many people are reluctant to accept such mundane explanations even though that's where the evidence points.

In order to utilize this book/course to the fullest extent, it is important to know how to analyze new ideas and to think in a critical manner that is positive and useful. The following guidelines have been adapted from Weiten and Lloyd (2006).

1. **Ask questions and be willing to wonder:** Rather than passing judgments about behavior—yours and others'—get curious. What does the behavior accomplish for the person?
2. **Define the problem:** It helps to think in concrete examples when changing behavior. Rather than

thinking about how to be a better person, ask yourself what exactly could you do to become more like what you want to be.

3. **Examine the evidence:** Does the evidence come from research that is valid and reliable or is it someone's personal assertion or opinion?
4. **Analyze biases and assumptions:** Are you willing to consider evidence that contradicts your beliefs? Can you evaluate and recognize the bias of others?
5. **Avoid emotional arguments—yours and others':** Feelings are important, but they should not substitute for careful appraisal of arguments and evidence.
6. **Don't oversimplify:** Look beyond the obvious. Reject simplistic either-or thinking. Be wary of anecdotal stories as the basis for new information.
7. **Consider other interpretations:** Before you leap to conclusions, think about other explanations. Be especially careful about assertions of cause and effect.
8. **Tolerate uncertainty:** Be willing to accept some guiding ideas and beliefs, but also be willing to give them up when evidence and experience contradict them.

Learning Actively

There are many different styles of learning, and the best educators try to incorporate as many approaches as possible to better serve the learner. Some people are more visual and need to see things in order to learn. Others are auditory and like to listen to and/or read instructions. Then there are those who need a "hands-on" experience and have to *do* things to fully understand. I've tried to provide experiences in this course that appeal to various styles. Consider whether you have a preferred style and tap into the learning experiences that best match your needs.

Regardless of style, you need to be an active learner. Many of us have had an education that did not promote active learning. Some educators and school systems are more comfortable with students who do not question things, think for themselves, or try to direct their own learning. For many of us, we were expected to take a passive stance by doing the work assigned, memorizing facts, and repeating information on tests. Active learning, on the other hand, requires you to interact with the material, question it, and make it your own. Carl Rogers, a well-known humanistic psychologist, years ago wrote the book *Freedom to Learn for the 80's* (1983). Information he offered then is still valid today. He described the following hallmarks of active learning:

- **It is self-initiated:** There is a sense of discovery, reaching out, and comprehending that comes from within the learner.
- **It is pervasive:** It makes a difference in the behavior, attitudes, and personality of the learner.

- **The locus of evaluation is within the learner:** The learner determines whether what is being learned is meeting his or her needs.
- **It is significant and matters to the learner:** It is holistic in that it combines the logical and cognitive with the intuitive and feeling dimensions.

Final Word on Learning from These Materials

A healthy, balanced sense of self-discipline is a prerequisite for success in any area of human relations. Being able to focus on future goals and withstand the temptations of immediate gratification is essential for many important accomplishments in life. Take some time to consider what you might need to do more or less of in order to develop a balanced sense of self-discipline. What plan of action are you willing to commit to at this point to learn the information in this course?

Now that you have considered this information, and thought about what you would like to get out of your human relations course, it might be a good idea to review the table of contents and browse through the rest of the book. What topics are of particular interest to you?

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

During the past 30 years of teaching Human Relations, I have discovered particular rhythms and cycles to teaching in a college setting. This text presents topics in a manner consistent with the cycles within the term or semester, and it also incorporates the group dynamics of a classroom into the process and content of the course. Most texts put topics in a logical order that makes sense when reading the book independent of a class, but I've found that some topics can be introduced only after the class has reached a particular point of readiness. Over the years, I have developed a curriculum that is based, in part, on my experience about how topics naturally overlap and build on previously presented material.

Part I: Learning About Yourself

The first four chapters are designed to help you get to know yourself better while building relationships with others in the class. The topics presented are general psychological concepts that apply to everyday life. They also lay the foundation for how to explore and use the material presented in the rest of the text.

Chapter 1, *Basic Principles and Communication*, includes communication, assertiveness, and diversity. Communication is an important topic early on because good communication is an essential part of human relations and communication is used in the course to think about and apply the material. Assertiveness is included in this chapter because of its relationship to effective communication and overcoming fears. The material in the diversity section provides information about how to view the content of subsequent sections in a new light.

Chapter 2, *Self-Awareness*, is about self-concept and the importance of learning more about ourselves, including aspects of ourselves that we may avoid or keep hidden. This chapter includes information about self-disclosure, the shadow self, the masks people wear, attention and how we get it, locus of control and its relationship to self-concept, and the importance of and need for physical contact. In the section on self-concept, I include discussions of whether there is such a thing as “too much” self-esteem and its relationship to narcissism. Perfectionism is included because of its potential negative effects on self-esteem.

Chapter 3, *Personality and Comfort Zones*, covers how expanding our comfort zones is necessary to improve human relations. We explore how taking risks is necessary for having more options in a number of different areas of your life. Personality is included because part of improved human relations is the ability to communicate effectively with personality styles different than your own—which involves expanding your comfort zone and taking risks. Other topics that address the need for leaving familiar territory in thinking and behaving are self-defeating behaviors, limiting beliefs, accountability, and developing character.

Chapter 4, *Emotions and Stress Management*, presents a number of building blocks that lay the foundation for understanding emotions. Information helps readers develop greater emotional control through challenging their thought patterns and irrational beliefs. Theories of emotion are presented, along with practical suggestions for greater emotional control. The chapter covers a range of emotional responses—anger, sadness, fear, and guilt—pointing out that much of our training in dealing with emotions takes place during the formative years in our family of origin. (Happiness and joy are included with positive psychology in Chapter 11.)

Part II: Learning About Interactions with Others

Part II provides students with the opportunity to explore how concepts and information you learned about yourself in Part I influence how you behave in the larger world. And how the larger world, in turn, influences how you behave with others.

Chapter 5, *Family Influences*, explores the influence of the family of origin, including the implications of birth order for the roles we play in other areas of life. It also covers issues that arise in stepfamilies. The chapter outlines the elements of a functional family and the complications of living in a dysfunctional family. Information is included on the history of the family, how changes in the family are reflected in the 2010 Census, and myths about families.

Chapter 6, *Social Influence and Group Behavior*, covers the reciprocal relationship between individuals and groups: how individuals can modify the actions of groups and how groups can alter the behavior of individuals. Classic studies in the field of social psychology are revisited with an emphasis on the implications for human relations.

Chapter 7, *Developing Close Relationships*, studies attraction, mate selection, and marriage. Information and discussions cover attachment theory, the difficulties in achieving intimacy, codependent relationships, aspects of successful relationships (John Gottman), and how to create and maintain a successful marriage. Material is presented from David Schnarch on the importance of *differentiation* in establishing a healthy relationship. The importance of developing and maintaining friendships is also discussed.

Chapter 8, *Human Sexuality*, examines social and cultural influences on sexual behavior, highlighting the fact that many beliefs about sexuality are influenced by how the topic is approached within the family system. The subjects of sexual abuse, homosexuality, sexual harassment, date rape, sex education, and sexually transmitted infections are also covered. Material has been updated on AIDS and sex education in the United States.

Part III: Learning About Adjustment in Life

After exploring individual behavior in Part I and group behavior in Part II, Part III addresses issues of adjustment that occur over the period of the entire life span. The chapters in Part III explore specific issues that most people will have to confront at one time or another in everyday life.

Chapter 9, *Health, Wellness, and Coping Skills*, presents topics related to health, the new Food Pyramid, lifestyle and well-being, and confronting the increase in obesity. Self-defeating behavior patterns are explored and new coping strategies are provided. Discussions and suggestions for conflict management are offered. There is a section on psychological disorders and therapeutic approaches with guidelines for getting professional help.

Chapter 10, *Life span Development and Transitions*, portrays the inevitability of change and loss as a developmental aspect of human relations and offers guidelines for dealing with life passages. Information about the effects of our rapidly changing society is offered, and means for dealing with the transitions that will occur in life are suggested. This chapter also includes theories of career development and discusses the significance of having a balance between work and leisure. Information about dealing with death and dying issues is provided.

Chapter 11, *Positive Living and Life Satisfaction*, starts with a section on various aspects of positive psychology and suggestions for increasing happiness and joy. The importance of values clarification and the benefits of having meaning and purpose in life are examined. The chapter suggests ways to maintain the changes that have been accomplished as you have progressed through the course, emphasizing the fact that personal changes usually require a certain degree of commitment. A discussion of the components of good decision making is included. The chapter also encourages students to consider changes that could be made as a result of having new choices. Sections focus on the importance of achieving life satisfaction, caring for yourself and others, and approaching the world with forgiveness and love.

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LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF

The first four chapters are designed to help you get to know yourself better while building relationships with others in the class. The topics presented are general psychological concepts that apply to everyday life. They also lay the foundation for how to explore and use the material presented in the rest of the text.

The Rules for Being Human

1. You will receive a body. You may like it or hate it, but it will be yours for the entire period this time around. How you perceive it is your choice.
2. You will learn lessons. You are enrolled in a full-time informal school called life. Each day in this school you will have the opportunity to learn lessons. You may like the lessons or think them irrelevant and hence choose to ignore them—no matter, keep reading.
3. A lesson is repeated until learned. A lesson will be presented to you in various forms until you have learned it. When you have learned it, you can then go on to the next lesson.
4. There are no mistakes, only lessons. Growth is a process of trial and error, of experimentation. The “failed” experiments are as much a part of the process as the experiments that ultimately “work.”
5. Learning lessons does not end. There is no part of life that does not contain its lessons. If you are alive, there are lessons to be learned.
6. “There” is no better than “here.” When your “there” has become a “here,” you will simply obtain another “there” that will again look better than “here.”
7. Your answers lie only inside you. The answers to life’s questions lie only inside you. All you need to do is look, listen, and trust.



1

BASIC PRINCIPLES AND COMMUNICATION

One year, around Christmastime, I knew that I needed something new in my life. I had been going through some significant personal changes and thought that a new adventure would help with the transition. I usually made the pilgrimage home to visit family at that time of year and wondered whether the trip could be made differently. So I decided that a different mode of transportation might make the journey more enlightening. That's how I came to be on Amtrak for 28 hours, riding between Portland and Los Angeles. I wanted to spend some time with my kids, and this seemed like the perfect solution. There would be time to connect, time to think, and time for a shared adventure as well.

When we arrived at the train depot, the line of passengers already snaked from the platform all the way across the station. Each group of people had encircled itself with luggage, and everyone was careful not to invade anyone else's turf. The same mentality seemed to pervade the air as we boarded the train and people staked out their seats. We entered the first phase of the trip in the midst of people preoccupied with their own books, laptops, and private conversations. No one seemed interested in talking to strangers. After about three hours, though, it seemed that some were ready for a degree of interaction. People began to wander around the train exchanging stories about intended destinations as a way of making contact. The previous mood of eyeing each fellow traveler as if he or she were a potential mass murderer had begun to wane.

The next shift in attitudes and interactions came as the sun set, and there was no longer a view of the passing scenery. The light from the dome on the train turned the window glass into a mirror, and the reflection made all of us more aware of being fellow travelers as we viewed ourselves in this capsule. It seemed that everyone relaxed a bit more and began interacting in a friendlier manner. People opened up about their lives, sharing more than just destinations.

After a night of trying to sleep sitting up, there was a new level of interaction among the weary travelers. The neat, orderly scene at departure had been transformed into something the federal government might fund as a natural disaster area. People spent a good deal of time comparing various aches and pains in different parts of their anatomy. Throughout the day, everyone was much friendlier, seemingly as a result of having shared and endured a common ordeal. The whole train became more of a living room, and everyone on board seemed to be a member of a temporary family.

The energy and level of interaction continued to increase, until it peaked with the announcement that we were only three hours from Los Angeles. A tremendous roar went up as people began to act as if it were New Year's Eve. Everyone was now everyone else's long-lost buddy, and the last three hours of the trip flew by as we all partied our way into the station. The people getting off the train didn't seem to be the same people who had gotten on in Portland. Particular seat assignments had long since ceased being important, and all on board went about claiming possessions in a helpful and cheerful manner. As bodies spilled off the train, good feelings were conveyed with the "Good lucks" and "Take cares" sandwiched between the exchanges of phone numbers and addresses. I wondered what the experience might have been like if everyone had acted in the same manner at the beginning of the trip as they did at the end.

I decided to try an experiment. Faced with the same 28-hour ride on the way home, I wondered if I could initiate interactions sooner. My children and I boarded the train



for the trip home and allowed an appropriate amount of time for people to settle into their places. Then we thought about how to make the beginning of this trip back up to Portland more like the end of the trip down. I had my mandolin along and took it out. I play in a bluegrass band and like to practice when I'm traveling. We started by singing Christmas songs, and with a little help from the holiday spirit still lingering in the air, we soon had a number of kids singing along. The carefree attitude of the children eventually got the parents involved too. Within a short period of time, we had quite a crowd laughing and having a good time.

While we were singing and telling stories in our end of the train car, people from other cars walked through the group on their way to and from the dining car, observation dome, or bathrooms. Most would smile and nod approval, and some even stopped for a song or two. When we had sung most of the songs we knew, and because another group had started up at the other end of the car, we decided to take a break.

We had no idea how successful our experiment had been until we took a walk to the dining car at the other end of the train. As we walked through the different train cars, we were pleasantly surprised to find a group of people singing in every one. Apparently, there was a chain reaction as people walking through our song group took the idea back to their cars. In each new group we passed, we noticed the faces of people who had stopped to sing with us. Perhaps encouraged by the children's uninhibited response to a good time in our original group, the adults had decided not to worry about looking foolish. Some people had taken the risk of breaking the ice and carried the enjoyment and enthusiasm back to their cars.

It was exciting to walk the length of the train and find people relating and connecting in a manner similar to the last few hours of the trip down—and this was only three hours into the ride home. Needless to say, the journey home was much more comfortable and enjoyable. When people got over their initial reluctance to deal with each other, they got to do what they probably wanted to do all along: connect with each other and have a good time.

Discussion This story illustrates how applying the general principles of behavior that will be presented in this chapter (in this case, the willingness to overcome the fear of what others will think of you, confront shyness, be assertive, initiate conversations, and take risks) can affect your enjoyment of everyday events.

This chapter presents basic principles of human behavior that will be applied throughout the text. Communication is explored for two reasons. First, human relations is all about communication—getting along with others requires communication. Second, communication is a good way to explore the ideas in the book and how they apply to you. When learning about human relations and applying the information to oneself, you may encounter barriers. Therefore, I also describe what some of those barriers are and how to address them. Some of the topics in this chapter are bigger than communication—gender differences, assertiveness, shyness, fear, and diversity. In this chapter, I discuss how these factors apply to communication. In future chapters, I discuss how they apply to other aspects of human relations.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 1

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Describe the 10 basic human relations principles presented at the beginning of this chapter.
2. What does the following statement mean: "The meaning of any communication is the response you get"?
3. Describe the features of good group communication. Include features of good listening as well as those of good speaking.
4. Describe the elements of nonverbal communication presented in the book.
5. Describe the differences in men's and women's communication patterns.
6. What are the effects of positive and negative self-talk on behavior?
7. What contributes to shyness and what are the ways to overcome shyness?
8. Describe the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive behavior.
9. Describe seven ways to develop assertiveness skills.
10. Describe the potential advantages and disadvantages of social networking.
11. Describe the impact of multitasking on productivity.
12. With regard to diversity, what is the difference between assimilation and pluralism?
13. Describe the elements of developing diversity consciousness.

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

The following 10 concepts serve as a foundation for understanding principles that apply to many of the areas of human behavior that are covered in the rest of this text. These ideas and themes will be revisited throughout the text as we explore information about human relations.

The First-Day Morgue Syndrome

A common response to a new or unusual situation is no response at all. Many of us feel somewhat uncomfortable when meeting new people or encountering a different situation for the first time, while we figure out the appropriate way to act. Unfortunately, some people become overly concerned about the right thing to do, so they freeze up and act as if they're dead. For example, have you ever noticed that some people lower their voices when they go into a bank? They act as if it is a funeral home or as if they don't want to disturb the money. They would be better off attempting to understand the new situation by using all of their senses to notice what is going on around them.

It is fine to be quiet sometimes or to play it safe in new situations, but the question is, Do you have a choice, and can you be different when you want to? One of the goals of a human relations course is to help you be more connected to the world around you. So, to remain flexible and have choices, you might want to remember the following: "*When in doubt, don't check out.*" This means that in a new or unusual situation, it may be useful to stay in the present moment and notice what is going on, both internally and externally. Check in instead of checking out. Then you can use that information to decide what course of action, if any, you wish to take.

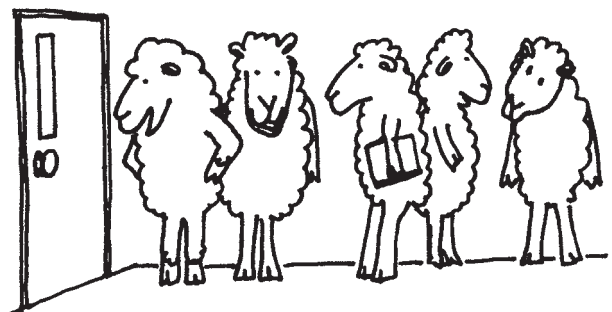
"Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimension."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Fears

There are many reasons for the **first-day morgue syndrome**, and most of them have to do with imagined responses to attempts to start a conversation: the **fear** of being rejected, saying the wrong thing, or looking foolish. The amazing thing to me, though, is that out of fear of embarrassment or concern about looking foolish, people will sometimes do incredibly strange things that make them look even more foolish.

For example, on the first day of one class, I found 30 people standing in the hall outside the classroom. I asked one student why everyone was waiting out there. He shrugged and looked at the ground. Someone else volunteered, "I think the door is locked." I went to the door, turned the handle, and walked into the room. (Where is reality TV when you need it?) After the class sheepishly filed into the room, I asked them why they had been standing out in the hall. It seems that the first person to arrive, afraid of looking foolish, had not wanted to be the first one in the room, so he sat down on a bench in the hall. The next person to arrive saw him sitting there and, not wanting to appear foolish, didn't bother to ask if he had tried the door. Each subsequent arrival, afraid of appearing foolish, failed to try the door or to ask why everyone was standing in the hall. Out of a fear of looking foolish, we can sometimes end up doing the very things that make us appear foolish.



So, even if you are afraid of looking foolish, it is sometimes better to think about the consequences of not taking action. When we let our fears get in the way of being how we would like to be, we sometimes contribute to the very situation we are trying to avoid.

Double Standards

We all have a tendency toward judging our own and other people's behavior by different criteria and standards. For example, did you ever have a bad day when you walked around like a junkyard dog, growling and snarling at anyone who tried to talk to you? Didn't you expect everyone to understand, without words, that it was just you and that they shouldn't take it personally? Now think of a time when the situation was reversed. You probably took it to heart and ended up feeling bad or angry because someone snapped at you.

At a party where you don't know many people, isn't it comforting to have someone approach you and start a conversation? Assuming that the other person acts appropriately, most people feel welcomed, included, and a little more relaxed when someone else starts a conversation. The double standard enters again when we think about initiating a conversation with another person, and suddenly the *first-day morgue syndrome* and the fear of looking foolish creep up again. It is alright for someone else to start a conversation, but not for us.

Another example of the **double standard** in human relations is the notion that we all make sense to ourselves. We frequently know the reasons behind our actions that others might find annoying: Why we didn't pick up a mess in our front yard ("I had to get my homework done"), were in the wrong lane and had to switch at the last minute ("I've never driven here before"), or failed to keep an appointment ("I forgot to write it down"). We may even be aware that to anyone who doesn't know the motivation behind the behavior, we may seem a little strange. Yet, we often expect everyone to know our motivation and to be patient, kind, and understanding. What happens when that situation is reversed? What happens when we see someone exhibiting behavior that we don't understand or that is annoying? Suddenly, most of us have a whole new set of standards. We expect others to make sense and to be consistent at all times. How dare anyone else do something that seems a little strange or that annoys me? We tend to attribute the best motives to ourselves and the worst motives to others. It is important to remember that we all have idiosyncrasies that make sense if we know the underlying reasons for the behavior.

Paradox

Paradox is an important idea for us to understand as we begin to study human nature. People's behavior is often counterproductive. At times, we are all experts at getting exactly what we don't want. How many people do you know who say they don't want X (some undesirable event) to happen, and yet every time they do Y (some behavior),

X happens? The prior 20 times they did Y (behavior), they got X (unwanted result); still, they persist in doing Y over and over again, each time expecting something different to happen. One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

If something bad happens every time you do Y, then why keep doing Y? Some people will stop doing Y for a while, and life starts getting better. Then they think, Well, I haven't done Y in a while, so I think I'll try once more just to see what happens. They try it, and when something goes wrong, they feel victimized by the world. This is paradoxical.

For example, recall the old Alka-Seltzer commercials: A man is sitting on the edge of the bed saying, "I ate too much, I ate too fast," over and over. He then proceeds to drop a couple of tablets in water and suddenly feels better. Have you ever wondered why it doesn't occur to him to just stop overeating and eating too fast?

There is another version of paradox in relationships. Some people have told me they felt so bad after the breakup of a relationship that they didn't go out with anyone for years. It was almost self-imprisonment. It is paradoxical to think that such behavior will make you feel better. There are even some people who hurt themselves just to make their exes feel bad. Wrong! It seldom works, and even if it does, it is the ultimate paradox: hurting yourself so that you can hurt someone else so that you can make yourself feel better.

It is also a paradox that in attempting to make something better, we sometimes make it worse. An example of this I call the **Bigger Hammer Theory**. People often try to solve a problem by doing *more* of the thing that isn't working. If a little tap from a little hammer doesn't fix it, then their solution is to get a bigger hammer and hit harder. I met a person at a party once who apparently thought that the way to be accepted is to have others think him intelligent. He had something to say on every topic; he dominated conversations and frequently made statements on topics about which he knew nothing at all. When he sensed that people didn't like him, he figured he wasn't trying hard enough, and so redoubled his efforts to be erudite, which made others avoid him even more. In an attempt to be accepted, he did the very thing that made others not want to be around him.

This kind of behavior can also be observed in many relationships. What each partner does to try to change or



Don't use a bigger hammer if a little one didn't work. Sometimes the solution is to use the right tool for the job.

fix the other person may make the other resistant, with the end result that each gets *less* of what he or she wants. Remember this concept and don't fall into the trap of solving a problem by getting a bigger hammer. Use the right tool for the job. If what you are doing doesn't work, do something—anything—else.

Positive Double Bind

An example of the **double bind** (damned if you do, and damned if you don't) came from the novel *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller. The story takes place during World War II. Captain Yossarian decides it is hazardous to his health to continue flying bombing raids, so he goes to the army psychiatrist and tells him of his concerns. The shrink decides that because Yossarian is afraid to fly, he is sane, and he therefore can't get out of the army and has to go ahead and fly. Yossarian then devises a scheme to prove he is crazy: He tells the shrink that he loves to fly bombing raids and go on dangerous missions. The shrink's response: Great! A person who likes what he does; a sign of mental health. A good person to send on bombing raids.

Let's consider how to use the double bind in a healthy way. Is there something that you wish you did more frequently, but when you are in a situation that provides an opportunity to behave the way you think you should, you find yourself running in the opposite direction? For example, you have to study for a test, but you decide you'll be more dedicated next time because a friend invited you to shoot baskets. Or, you need to say "no" more, but you decide to start saying it next time because this request is from a friend. Or, you want to lose weight, but you tell yourself you'll start tomorrow. These are paradoxes. The behaviors that we know how to do, even if they are negative, we keep on doing; the behaviors that we might benefit from doing, we frequently avoid or put off. That is what a human relations course is about: getting yourself to do more of what you know you should do and avoiding more of what you shouldn't do. From now on, your motto should be: ***If you want to, you don't have to; if you don't want to, you probably need to.*** This is what I call the **positive double bind**.

Risk Taking

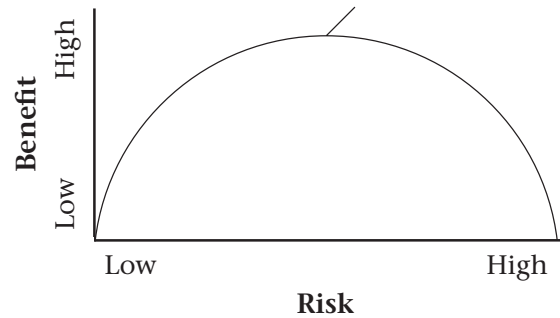
Just as in life, the benefits you get from this book and this course are directly related to the level of risk you are willing to take. I am not talking about physical risk but about emotional and psychological risk: a willingness to try something new or to explore different aspects of your personality.

Consider the cliché, "no pain, no gain." I want to be very clear about what that means in a human relations

*"You see things as they are and ask, "Why?"
But I dream things that never were and ask,
"Why not?""*

George Bernard Shaw

What Is Your Challenge Point?



course. There is a definite relationship between the amount of risk you are willing to take and the benefits you will gain. In general, the more you put out, the more you'll get back. The more you are willing to look at yourself, examine your behavior and motives, and share your experiences, the more you will benefit. But keep it in perspective, and remember that there is also a **law of diminishing returns**: If you take too big a risk, your resulting vulnerability may create fear or stress and result in your shutting down or becoming defensive. Stretch your boundaries, but only to the point that it is useful. Be firm but gentle with yourself in your requirements and expectations regarding the personal application of the information. In this class, as well as in life, take into account what is the optimal amount of risk for you to take at this point in time. Consider what your challenge point is, the point at which you take the amount of risk that will result in the greatest benefit.

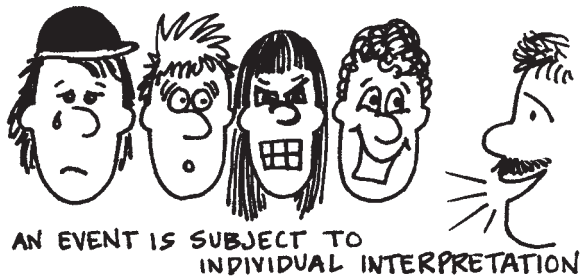
Observing Yourself

The way to really benefit from a human relations course is to observe yourself. This means to suspend judgments for a while and just be curious about yourself. (It might be useful to think of class time as laboratory time.) Act as if there aren't any rights or wrongs, just opportunities to explore your reactions to new experiences. People react differently to the same circumstances. There have been times when I have presented material that provoked various responses in students. For example, in response to the same story, one student laughed, one got irritated, one got bored, and one thought it was so significant and touching that she almost cried. Our reactions say a lot about us. When you do a class activity, you will have a chance to observe your own response. If you are observing only the instructor or other people, you are missing the best part of the course.

One principle in counseling theory is that the first step toward change is awareness of yourself and of the situation. To be where you want to be, you have to start with where you are, not where you wish you were. You can assess where you are by asking yourself these questions: What is my reaction? What is my reaction to my reaction?

If you have a particularly strong response to someone or some situation, instead of your usual reaction, stop and get curious about where that reaction came from and what it might mean about you. Becoming more introspective means

OBSERVE YOURSELF



being more observant about who you are, what you do, and what beliefs motivate you.

The Ninety-Percent Rule

Anyone dealing with human beings and human nature can be right only for about 90 percent of the topics 90 percent of the time for 90 percent of the people. When discussing information that could be useful in improving human relations with a large group, it is often necessary to deal in generalities. Yet, attempting to include as many people as possible creates the likelihood that some people will not fit every example or guideline offered. For some, the information may not be important or may be useful only in the future. Human beings don't fit formulas and equations very well. So, as valuable as the information in this book might be, remember to use it at the right time and in the right place. What works well for one person might not be useful to another.

Many human relations skills come from (a) knowing that there are many choices regarding how to be and (b) developing the perceptive ability to know how and when to use the information you have. Part of the task of a human relations course is being flexible enough to notice what is most likely to yield the desired result in a given situation. If you disagree with some of the information presented, feel free to just note it and move on. As much as possible, just pay more attention to what is useful and what does fit than to what doesn't.

Playing the Devil's Advocate

My definition of a **devil's advocate** is someone who spends more time looking at the 10 percent of the concepts that don't fit than at the 90 percent that do. How often do you have a tendency to play the devil's advocate? It's not that playing devil's advocate is good or bad, so much as it is a matter of when you do it, how much you do it, and whether it is a choice. As an example, there's the story of a man who had a job at Pendleton Woolen Mills. He had a talent for noticing irregularities in fabric, so he was put in charge of quality control. All day long he watched fabric coming off of weaving machines. Day after day he just looked for flaws. This was a valuable skill at work and greatly enhanced his career, but his friends and family were a bit dismayed when he began to look for flaws everywhere he went. Eventually, his life began to unravel, as he could only look for flaws and wasn't satisfied until he found them.

Needless to say, this ability didn't enhance his personal relationships. What started out as a useful skill became a detriment to living a well-balanced life. We all need to have the choice of when to point out errors and inconsistencies and when to just accept people and their imperfections.

Choice and Balance

The link between choice and balance is one of the most important concepts in this book. I will refer to it throughout the text. Good mental health is related to the ability to keep a sense of balance, and the factor that seems to relate most to that ability is having choices in reactions and behavior. For example, if John is limited in his choices for emotional expression, he will probably be out of balance in his personal relationships. Or, if he is out of balance in his time and commitment to work and family, it may be due to a lack of choices for behavior, real or perceived.

There is a reciprocal relationship between choice and balance. The more that you are able to vary your responses to match the situation (choices), the more likely you will be in balance. The more balanced you are, the more likely you will be to be able to develop more choices. One thing I hope to offer in this text is insight about opportunities for choices and balance in all aspects of your life.

Thought Question 1.1

What did you learn from these introductory concepts, and how can you apply them in your life? Which one was most significant for you?

COMMUNICATION

Communication is an early topic in this book for two reasons. First, when I ask people what they want to learn from a human relations class, invariably I get the response, “I want to learn to communicate better.” Some people do well in one-on-one situations but are terrified of speaking in front of a group. Fear of public speaking is probably one of the most common fears. On the other hand, there are people who enjoy talking in or to groups, yet are intimidated by one-on-one conversations. To improve communication skills, it is important to have choices and abilities in both situations.

We cannot *not* communicate. We are all communicating all the time, so let’s explore the implications of what this means by looking at elements of communication, the role of nonverbal communication, the difference in communication between men and women, the nature of shyness, how to become more assertive, overcoming fear, and how to become a more effective communicator. Practice makes perfect; we’re going to practice the skills discussed.

The second reason communication is an early topic in this book is that learning is a social enterprise; we learn best when we interact with others to explore the material. This, almost by definition, requires communication.

Elements of Communication

To understand communication, we will first explore three key elements:

1. Reasons for communicating
2. The process of communication
3. How to be a good communicator

REASONS FOR COMMUNICATING The benefits of connecting with other people are numerous. We can learn new and interesting things, play, be helpful, or persuade and influence. (This is usually what happens in marriages when trying to decide where to go for dinner or what movie to see.) We communicate to relate to others. Perhaps you have heard John Donne’s line, “No man is an island.” We are truly social animals. The importance of this concept can be seen in prisons where solitary confinement is used as a method of punishment. If you have taken away almost everything a person has, the only further punishment is to take away the opportunity to communicate with others. So, to summarize, we communicate in order to satisfy physical, identity, and social needs.

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION When two people are having a conversation, there is an elaborate system of

“You are the same today that you will be five years from now except for two things: the people you meet and the books you read.”

Benjamin Franklin

encoding and **decoding** messages. Encoding and decoding is the process that gives meaning to the words we say and hear. Encoding is what happens when you turn your thoughts into words: which words you choose, your intonation, how you choose to express yourself, and so on. Decoding is how the other person hears your words and understands your meaning. Encoding and decoding are constantly being influenced by each person’s thoughts (internal dialogues), feelings, and filters.

The concept of filters is important because it explains why misunderstandings occur. **Filters** are all the beliefs that can cause distortion in the message we receive when listening to someone. For example, we tend to accept information that supports our beliefs and reject information that contradicts our beliefs; two people can hear the same news broadcast and have two different reactions depending on their political beliefs. Filters come from the family in which we grew up, our past experiences, and the attitudes and beliefs that resulted from our interactions in those situations (Adler and Towne, 2003).

Our ability to understand and communicate effectively is also influenced by our **internal dialogues**. How many times during a conversation have you been so busy talking to yourself about what you are going to say next that you haven’t even heard what the other person has been saying? Some communications experts call that **internal noise**. The noise that affects filters can be influenced by emotions, the situation, and your self-concept. Is it any wonder, then, that we all have days when we don’t communicate very well? It is important to learn the skills that help eliminate the effects of your filters. There is a saying that illustrates this: *I know that you think you understand what I said, but do you also realize that what you heard is not what I meant to say?*

There are a number of barriers to effective communication that require awareness of our own and other people’s filters. Consider times when you have done the following and what the consequences were.

Barriers to Communication

- **Being critical or sarcastic:** Seldom does it help a conversation if people feel that they are constantly being judged.
- **Stereotyping:** Generalizations are frequently incorrect and only add to the filters that keep us from hearing what is being said.
- **Overreacting and/or interrupting:** This usually leads to defensiveness and frustration on the part of the speaker.
- **Having a hidden agenda:** It is difficult enough to solve a problem when all the cards are on the table.
- **Being overly anxious:** Trying too hard or communicating when upset may cause difficulties.

HOW TO BE A GOOD COMMUNICATOR One of the most valuable things you can do is to remember the following: **The meaning of any communication is the response you get.** It doesn’t matter what you think you said; the

response you get tells you how effective you were in communicating your message. Have you ever given someone a compliment, after which he or she seemed to be irritated? Based on the results, even if you had the best intentions, he or she wasn't complimented. Have you ever expressed irritation with someone who responded by laughing? Maybe the person didn't understand that you were angry. It is up to you to be flexible enough to notice the response you are getting and to change your behavior to get the response you want.

Methods to Improve Communication

- **Be more accepting:** We usually want other people to be accepting of our ideas, even when they may not appear to make sense. Try to reciprocate and be accepting of other people's ideas, even when the logic may not be apparent.
- **Be attentive:** Most of us like to think that what we are talking about is important or meaningful, and paying attention to the person talking says we're listening.
- **Wait for the big picture:** When someone is talking and we only notice the details, we may miss the main point.
- **Listen between the lines:** If we pay attention to the nonverbal signals as well as the words, we may get the real meaning.
- **Share responsibility for connecting:** To improve communications, both parties need to be involved in making sure that they understand each other.

How to Be a Good Listener

- Make an appropriate amount of **eye contact**.
- Use **body posture** that indicates listening behavior.
- Provide **verbal and nonverbal responses**, such as head nodding and "uh-huhs."
- Use appropriate **gestures** or touching.
- **Ask open-ended questions**, such as, "Tell me more about Y."
- **Paraphrase** and feedback what you hear.
- **Don't try to problem-solve** unless asked to.
- **Avoid distractions** by working at listening for more than just the words.

How to Be a Good Speaker

- **Be congruent:** Make your body language and words say the same thing. People are more likely to believe your actions than your words.
- **Make "I" statements and own your message:** It is usually better to state your own thoughts, feelings, and needs than to tell others what they should do or how they should think. Good "I" messages start with phrases such as the following: "I think . . .," "I prefer . . .," "I have found . . .," "It appears to me that . . .," "What I'm feeling is . . .," and "In my opinion . . ."
- **Do an appropriate amount of self-disclosure:** It is seldom useful or appropriate to tell the stranger at the bus stop your entire life history.
- **Be specific and direct:** Using generalities may cause confusion if the examples you offer have different meanings to your listeners.

Listen

*When I ask you to listen
and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I have asked.
When I ask you to listen
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel
the way I do,
you are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen
and you feel you have to do something to
solve my problem,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen,
all I asked you to do was listen, not talk, or do.
Just hear me. I can do for myself;
I'm not helpless—perhaps discouraged or
faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me
that I need to do for myself,
you contribute to my fear and weakness.
But, when you accept as fact that I feel
what I feel, no matter how irrational,
then I can stop trying to convince you and
get on with understanding
what's behind that irrational feeling.
And, when that's clear,
the answers will be obvious,
and I won't need any advice.*

Source unknown

- **Repeat the message:** Use different words, especially if it seems that people have not understood you as indicated by their response.
- **Make the message match the audience and context:** There is a time and a place for certain interactions.
- **Mirror:** Match the rhythm, volume, and inflection of the listener(s).
- **Keep it simple:** Sometimes less is more.

In everyday life, you have numerous opportunities to communicate and connect with other people. Think about your interactions as a building project. Are you contributing to a common goal? Is what you are offering creating something new? Concentrate on making an effort to work together. The purpose of learning communication skills is so that you can **build bridges, not walls**.

You may have had the experience of being in a conversation with someone who only seemed interested in tearing things down. Not very pleasant, is it? If someone has an opinion different from yours, get curious: This could be an opportunity to learn something new. Learn to value those who have dissimilar points of view, and listen to them. There may come a time when you want someone who disagrees with your point of view to listen to you! Here is a message that might help make all of this information applicable: **Nobody cares what you know until they know that you care!**

APPLICATION OF THESE IDEAS TO THIS COURSE Since oral communication is an important part of this human relations course, we will focus on it consciously and explicitly by providing ample opportunity to practice the above concepts and skills in the context of discussion groups. The goal of the discussions is twofold. Firstly, they provide you an opportunity to explore how the ideas apply to your own life. Secondly, they provide you an opportunity to practice good communication skills. To assist you in both, we have summarized characteristics of good group discussion in a rubric.

Here’s one way to use this rubric. After you participate in a discussion group, highlight the words and phrases in the rubric that describe your own behavior during the discussion.

See how well the others in the group agree with your analysis. Find one thing you can improve on to practice next time.

Nonverbal Communication

Various disciplines (psychology, sociology, speech) agree that the major part of communication happens on the non-verbal level. **Nonverbal communication** refers to messages that are transmitted from one person to another by means other than words: How you say something is as important as what is said. In a study of nonverbal communication, Albert Mehrabian (1993) claimed that 55 percent of a communication was facial expression, 38 percent was vocal expression

Group Discussion and Oral Communication Rubric

Trait	Green Light	Red Flag
Understands the Content Under Discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information is accurate 2. Terms are used correctly 3. Examples and counterexamples are relevant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Struggles to provide ideas or support for ideas, or ideas are hard to understand 2. Terms are used incorrectly 3. It is hard to understand how examples and counterexamples are relevant to the topic being discussed
Interaction with Others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listens to others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonverbal behaviors are positive: leaning forward, looking at the person speaking, nodding, smiling • Doesn’t interrupt • Asks clarifying questions such as “Tell me more about . . .” or “What did you mean by . . .” • Paraphrases and feeds back what is heard • Doesn’t try to problem-solve unless asked to 2. Is a courteous speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language and words are congruent • Expresses one’s own point of view without implying that others need to believe the same thing; makes “I” statements • Uses language others will understand • Does an appropriate amount of self-disclosure 3. Shares the spotlight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pauses to let others talk • Draws others into the conversation • Paces one’s own contribution to not overwhelm others 4. Makes others feel comfortable expressing their insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirrors: matches others’ styles • Invites other points of view 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doesn’t listen to others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonverbal behaviors are negative: sitting back, crossing arms, scowling, shaking head, rolling eyes • Interrupts • Makes irrelevant or distracting statements • Cannot summarize what another person said • Has advice about everything 2. Is not a courteous speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language is negative even when the words are positive • Is arrogant about one’s own point of view • Tries to impress others by being a thesaurus • Overwhelms with irrelevant detail or includes so much personal information that others are embarrassed 3. Either monopolizes the conversation or is totally uninvolved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes a comment on what everyone else said; doesn’t let anyone else respond • Doesn’t stop talking • Uninvolved in the conversation even when directly asked for a contribution 4. Interactions with others are negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ridicules another’s experiences • Non-courteous/rude • Uses a mocking tone of voice
Open to Being Influenced by Others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relates others’ points of view to oneself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States how one’s own experience is akin to that of another • Agrees or disagrees courteously • Indicates that another’s statement is interesting and might be relevant to oneself • Acknowledges that having a different point of view doesn’t make a person wrong 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disregards others’ points of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never changes one’s opinion; “My mind’s made up, don’t confuse me with the facts.” • Attacks another person’s point of view • Is insincere in agreeing with another person or relating someone else’s experience to one’s own • Implies that another person is wrong for having his or her point of view

(volume and tone of voice), and only 7 percent was the verbal message. Most people are so concerned about saying the right thing that they miss this valuable point. Being congruent (having your words and nonverbal communications match) is often more important than the words themselves. If you approach someone in a friendly manner, what you say may not matter so much. Focus on your intention, and others will usually get the message and react accordingly.

Nonverbal communication includes body language (facial expression, eye contact, gestures), space and distance, and paralanguage (various aspects of a person's voice). I have seen couples in marriage counseling sitting in silence staring at each other, yet obviously communicating with each other. After a period of time, one person may clear his throat, making a particular sound, and then the other person may raise her eyebrow a quarter of an inch. This might result in the first person leaning forward in his chair and beginning to accuse his partner of horrible behavior in an angry tone of voice. The recipient of the accusation then may cross her arms and begin to complain about the unfairness of the attack. In this type of situation, many things are communicated other than verbal messages.

Further evidence of the effects of nonverbal communication appears when there is a discrepancy between words and actions. People often say one thing while their bodies contradict their words. If a person is red in the face, yelling, and pounding his fist, it may not make a difference that he is saying, "I am not angry." Which message would you be inclined to believe if you were getting those two opposing messages?

Part of the importance of understanding the various aspects of nonverbal communication is the realization that it is nearly impossible not to communicate. Our actions give out signals about our state of being, whether we intend them to or not. Even when we try to mask or control our nonverbal messages, we frequently have a difficult time doing so. When people make a very determined effort not to let their emotional underpinnings show through, their true feelings usually emerge spontaneously and leak past the attempt at control (Eckman, 2009). Or, as Freud stated, "Self betrayal oozes from all our pores."

PARALANGUAGE **Paralanguage** refers to the nonlinguistic aspects of verbal communication that may carry additional information and meaning. Examples include the following:

- **Speed:** A rapid rate of speech may convey a different meaning than the same words spoken in a leisurely manner.
- **Pitch:** When someone raises his or her voice, it may indicate embarrassment or an emotional response. The importance of pitch is evident when talking to someone who speaks in a constant monotone and never varies the pitch.
- **Volume:** How loudly or softly words are being spoken gives additional meaning and emphasis to the message.

- **Rhythm and inflection:** Emphasis given to some words may change the whole meaning of a sentence or even change it into a question. A classic example from an old vaudeville routine is to say, "What is this thing called Love?" and emphasize a different word each time you repeat it.

BODY LANGUAGE Posture and movement convey meaning. However, not all gestures or body movements mean the same thing from one person to another. This is especially true when considering different cultures. In U.S. culture, when a person puts his or her thumb and first finger together in a circle, it means "OK." In another culture, that may mean the equivalent of raising the middle finger in U.S. culture. So, more important than trying to ascribe universal meaning to a particular gesture or movement is understanding the meaning for each individual. For example, every time one friend feels defensive or feels criticized, he crosses his arms, yet for another friend it means listening attentively. The point is that it is better to calibrate behavior for the individual than to generalize to all human beings. That said, let's look at the various aspects of what constitutes **body language**.

- **Facial expressions:** It is often possible to tell if a person is feeling sad, excited, angry, surprised, scared, or disgusted, even without words (Eckman, 1994). Facial expression may also convey judgments, intensity of emotion, and comprehension.
- **Eye contact:** We have an elaborate system of unspoken rules about whom it is permissible to have direct eye contact with and for how long. We have such sayings as, "The eyes are the windows to the soul" and "You can tell if a person is honest if he or she looks you in the eye." If a man stares at a woman, it may be a sign of attraction, whereas if he stares at another man for too long, it may be a sign of aggression or an invitation to fight. In some cultures, direct eye contact may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect; in others, it means just the opposite.
- **Gestures and touching:** Some people are very demonstrative and "talk with their hands." Pointing a finger at someone or shaking a fist communicates as much as words can. Physical touch is another way to communicate with the hands. We place a good deal of importance on the ritual of handshaking in our culture, and much transpires unconsciously during that process. There are times when words just aren't enough, and a hug, a pat on the back, or a hand on the shoulder carries more meaning.

"Who you are speaks so loudly, that I cannot hear what you are saying."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

SPACE AND DISTANCE Personal space and the distance between two people who are communicating also have meaning. We all have an invisible circle around us, and most people are aware of just how close to come to someone while interacting. Edward Hall (1969) described four distinct categories of space and distance:

- **Intimate distance:** The space from our skin to about 18 inches away is usually reserved for close friends and loved ones.
- **Personal distance:** Eighteen inches to 4 feet is usually the appropriate distance for normal conversations.
- **Social distance:** Four to 12 feet is likely to occur when there is an impersonal or business relationship.
- **Public distance:** Twelve feet or more is used for speaking to a large audience.

When having a conversation, notice how moving closer to or farther away from the other person can have an impact on the level of communication. Consider a time when someone invaded your personal space in a conversation.

Gender and Communication

Gender is a different concept than **sex**. *Sexual* differences between men and women refer to biologically determined functions. Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, and attitudes that come to be expected of persons based on their biological sex. For example, changing diapers and taking out the garbage are not sex roles. They are socially constructed gender roles. There is no gene for changing a diaper or taking out the garbage; they are the arbitrary divisions of labor that society has constructed.

Of course, the biological basis for gender distinctions and the “nature/nurture” debate—whether or to what degree gendered behavior is controlled by biology or socialization—continues. Robinson and Howard-Hamilton (2000), for example, maintain that gender roles are far too often attributed to biology. In any case, there are differences in the ways that men and women communicate, some of which may be due to biology and some of which may be due to socialization.

Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, wrote a widely praised book called *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990), which deals with the complexities of communication between the sexes. Tannen presents examples of how women and men are socialized to relate and have conversations with others in such different ways that the two sexes often encounter difficulties in their efforts to communicate and connect. Even though the original work was done in 1990, a new edition was published in 2001, and many of the concepts presented about conversational style are still pertinent today. Although there is some criticism that her work is oversimplified, or that there is greater equality between the sexes today, it can serve as a useful construct to discuss how to improve communication between the sexes.

In an attempt to clarify gender differences in communication, Tannen proposed that women in Western cultures tend to engage more in **rapport talk** and men tend to engage more in **report talk**, although the mix for different individuals can vary and it's useful to be able to do both. Rapport talk is using conversation to negotiate closeness and intimacy; it establishes connections and maintains or promotes relationships. Report talk exchanges information and is used to establish position in a group.

People who engage in report talk use communication to convey information, hold center stage, and in some cases establish an informal sense of hierarchy. They use communication as a means of getting and holding attention, for example, telling jokes and stories. They may use conversation and information as a means of dominance or to avoid being *pushed around*. They may have a more aggressive style of talking and interrupt others more often. For report talkers, communication may be a form of contest to establish who is “one up.” Notice that this communication style is more often used by men. (This may be related to being reluctant to ask for directions, which is an implicit acknowledgment of not having enough information.)

In contrast, women tend to be rapport talkers; they are not typically socialized to use language as a defensive weapon to avoid being dominated or controlled. Rather, women use language to achieve and share intimacy with others, to promote closeness and equality in a group, to prevent others from *pushing them away*, and as a way to judge how close or distant they are from a valued partner.

Tannen also found other examples of the differences in gender communication. One involves talking about problems. Tannen suggests the term **troubles talk** to describe how many women aren't necessarily seeking advice when talking about their problems. They view those conversations as a means of making connections and sharing life experiences. Interaction is a way to show involvement, and listening to others is a means to communicate caring and interest.

Men, on the other hand, tend to share problems in order to gain information about how to find a solution. There is a basic assumption that communication is for the exchange of ideas. This may be the difficulty that occurs when a woman talks about her troubles as a means of connecting and the man responds by trying to offer information to fix things.

For a woman, troubles talk is intended to reinforce rapport by sending the message “We're the same; you're not alone.” Such a response would put both communicators on an equal footing, thus allowing intimacy to be built around equality. If one partner responds with advice when the other partner is only looking for understanding, this response frames him or her as more knowledgeable. Tannen tells people, especially women, to minimize this relationship-eroding influence by telling their partners that when dealing with emotional troubles, they do not want solutions, just someone to listen.

Other key gender differences in communication styles discussed by Tannen include women's inclinations to think a relationship is working if both partners continue

to talk about it, contrasted with men's tendencies to think things are okay if they do not need to keep talking about their relationship. Men have a propensity to clam up at home, a place where they feel free not to talk since there is no need to keep their edge in a competitive, one-up world. Women have a tendency to open up in the comfort of home, where they feel free to talk.

Tannen stresses that the first step in improving communication is understanding and accepting that there are very likely systematic differences in communication styles (most frequently, but not always, depending on sex), and that it is not a question of one style being more right or wrong than the other. Tannen reports that many people have indicated to her that once they came to understand these differences in how the sexes use language, they were better able to put their problems of communication in a manageable context—and often to arrive at solutions to seemingly irresolvable predicaments.

It is important to remember that there is as much variation within the sexes as there is between them, and that these are general concepts. With that in mind, however, there are suggestions that could be useful when considering communication skills:

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

Hints for Men

- Notice if you have a tendency to interrupt, especially when talking with women.
- Avoid responding in monosyllables. Give details about your experiences.
- Learn the art of give and take. Ask women questions about themselves.
- Make requests instead of commands.
- Learn to open up about personal issues. Talk about your feelings.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Hints for Women

- When others interrupt, it is permissible to redirect the conversation back to you.
- Direct communication isn't necessarily combative. Ask for what you want.
- State your needs as a request rather than a question.
- It is appropriate to talk about yourself and your accomplishments, especially if others are doing the same.
- Talk about facts and information if you are so inclined. Offer your opinions.
- Resist the temptation to be overly apologetic.

Once people realize that their partners have different conversational styles, they are inclined to accept differences without blaming themselves, their partners, or their relationships. The biggest mistake is believing that there is *only* one right way to listen, talk, or have a conversation—or a relationship. If you understand gender differences in communication as variance in conversational style, you stand a better chance of preventing disagreements and opening lines of communication.

Self-Talk and Communication

In order to practice communication skills and overcome barriers to effective communication, you need to be aware of your own internal dialogue regarding communication. Since such **self-talk** affects more than just how and whether we communicate with others, I'll discuss a little about self-talk in general. As we go, think about how this information affects how you communicate.

No, you're not crazy if you talk to yourself. We all talk to ourselves every day, whether we are aware of it or not. Actually, you're probably crazy if you don't talk to yourself. Most of the thinking we do during the course of the day is actually conversations we have with ourselves. How many times have you talked yourself into going back to bed because of the negative conversation you were having with yourself about the scheduled events of the day? By the same token, have you ever been physically ill but gotten yourself "psyched up," for an exciting event that came up unexpectedly? These are examples of the power of self-talk.

Examine your self-talk and you will see how you are training yourself to respond. What percentage of the time are the things you think about and say to yourself positive? What percentage of the time are they negative? The way we think is likely to have a significant influence on the way we feel and what we do. The way we perceive a given situation and what we tell ourselves as we think about it affect the feelings we experience and how our actions follow as a consequence. The process is as follows:

1. Stimulus event
2. Self-talk about the event
3. Consequences exhibited in feelings and actions

The same stimulus event can produce quite different outcomes depending on the thoughts that are introduced at the second stage. At some time, you have probably witnessed two people who had drastically different responses to the same situation. Most likely, the difference was due to the different perceptions of each person, and that was directly related to their internal dialogues describing the event.

One common element of successful people is that they have learned how to precede their actions with positive self-talk. You would do well to remember Shakespeare's line (*Hamlet*): "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking it makes it so." So why is it difficult to keep positive thoughts in mind? Given the general negativity of society, it is not at all surprising that people have a difficult time thinking positive thoughts, because the deck seems to be stacked against us.

"It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it."

Somerset Maugham

Thought Question 1.2

What have you noticed about your self-talk when you observe your internal dialogue? How often is it positive, and how often is it negative? What would be an appropriate affirmation for you that would increase positive thinking?

AFFIRMATIONS Many sources suggest that we truly become what we think about. Thoughts that are repeated over and over become more firm in our minds. They become feelings, behaviors, and experiences. One way to flip the switch on negative thinking is to use **affirmations**. Affirmations are positive thoughts and usually begin with “I am” and are stated in the present tense. Affirm as though you already have what you want, even though you don’t yet have it. (The operative word is “yet.”) You can write down your affirmations and then put them in places where you will see them. A powerful technique is to say your affirmation while looking yourself in the eyes in a mirror. Start catching your negative thoughts, switching them around, and making affirmations out of them. By slightly revising the negative chatter, you can turn all those formerly limiting inner voices into suggestions for future affirmations.

Shyness and Communication

Shyness affects the ability to communicate effectively. Since shyness affects more than just how and whether we communicate with others, I’ll talk a little about shyness in general. As we go, think about how this information affects how you communicate.

If you sometimes feel uncomfortable meeting new people, you’re not alone. Most people suffer from shyness at one time or another. It is a very common problem. Henderson and Zimbardo (accessed May 2011) report that nearly 50 percent of people report being so shy that it represents a problem in their lives.

Shyness is an anxiety reaction in social situations, a failure of confidence, and extreme discomfort when interacting with or confronting other people. Shy people

tend to be overly concerned with how they look, how they sound, and how others view them. They are often afraid they will be regarded as foolish, unattractive, unintelligent, or unworthy. This attitude obviously impairs their ability to develop good human relations skills, and shy people find it hard to make friends. Further evidence of the importance of understanding and overcoming shyness is the reciprocal relationship between shyness and loneliness: Shyness leads to loneliness and loneliness leads to shyness.

There are a number of other consequences of shyness that support the need for learning coping skills to overcome the negative effects of shy behavior. Some of those consequences, according to Zimbardo (1999), are as follows:

- **Reluctance to experience new situations:** Shyness prevents people from taking appropriate risks and therefore inhibits learning of new skills.
- **Unassertiveness:** Shyness prevents people from standing up for their rights and expressing their thoughts and feelings.
- **Limited ability to show personal strengths:** Shyness prevents others from making positive evaluations and giving positive feedback.
- **Preoccupation with self:** This leads to further self-consciousness.

Various studies in recent years have identified three potential sources of shyness: heredity, lack of social skills, and social programming that fosters poor self-esteem instead of self-confidence (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006). One study, conducted by psychologists at Yale and Harvard universities, found that 10 to 15 percent of children are born with a propensity to shyness. We have all seen infants who turn away from strangers, and toddlers who hide behind a parent when spoken to even by an adult they know. Of course, circumstances play a role in determining whether an inherited tendency to become shy is expressed. The Yale–Harvard study revealed that two thirds of shy children had older siblings who perhaps bullied or belittled them, shaking their self-confidence. Parents can also seriously undermine a child’s self-esteem through repeated negative comments about the child’s ability or appearance or by failing to praise the child’s accomplishments, however limited.

Another possible cause of shyness is our highly competitive society. We have a higher incidence of shyness than other cultures. From birth, we are constantly compared with others; this can lead to feelings of inferiority and set up another reciprocal relationship. If people think they are inferior, they may act shy and that can create a self-fulfilling prophecy: They behave in a manner that supports their existing beliefs about who they are and what is possible for them. People can change, however. Even lifelong shyness behavior can be overcome.

*“No one can make you feel inferior
without your consent.”*

Eleanor Roosevelt

OVERCOMING SHYNESS To overcome shyness, the following three components of shyness must be addressed:

1. **Feelings:** Feelings associated with shyness include anxiety, insecurity, tension, fear, and confusion.
2. **Physical reactions:** Physical reactions include shaking, perspiring, a pounding heart, blushing, and feeling faint.
3. **Thoughts about self and others:** Thoughts about yourself might include, “I’m not as good as others,” “I’m not very interesting,” or “I can’t deal with embarrassment.” Thoughts about others might include, “They probably won’t like me,” “They’re going to reject me,” or “They are watching everything I do.”

Overcoming shyness may not be easy at first, but it can be done. The following steps will help in the process of dealing with shyness:

1. **Identify your shyness:** Identify what situations and settings tend to elicit your reactions. Identify the causes in each situation and the thoughts that precede your shyness. Ask for feedback from a friend on how you can improve.
2. **Build your self-esteem:** Set your own standards for how you want to be in life. Recognize that you really can control how you see yourself. Set realistic goals and don’t demand too much of yourself. Talk to yourself in a positive manner and remember that you are a good person. Remember, the only person to compare yourself to is you. Ask yourself if you are doing the best you can at that moment, keeping in mind that you are just as valuable as any other person.
3. **Improve your social skills:** Find a role model and observe how he or she interacts; then imitate that behavior. Smile and make eye contact. Listen and really focus on the other person. Rehearse what you want to say and practice how you want to sound. Remember, you aren’t alone.
4. **Change negative thoughts about yourself to positive thoughts:** The major difference between shy people and those who are not shy is self-evaluation. What you say to yourself has an impact on your feelings and physical reactions. Interrupt the internal conversation you have with yourself if you start to compare yourself to others. Then say positive things to yourself about your abilities. For example, change “They probably won’t like me” when being introduced to new people to “They just might like me.”

Overcoming Fear When Communicating

Fear affects the ability to communicate effectively. Common communication fears are fear of disapproval, rejection, or conflict/controversy. As with other topics in this section, because fear affects more than just how and whether we communicate with others, I’ll talk a little about fear in general. As we go, think about how this information affects how you communicate.

We all know what fear feels like. It is probably the most common limiting emotion. For some people, it is the most common feeling. One description of fear could be the acronym **FEAR: False Expectations Appearing Real**. For the most part, what we fear is not real; it is merely our mind imagining something awful that has not yet happened. Put another way, fear is interest paid on a debt you may not owe. Surprisingly, fear has a gift for us: energy. If you think (or possibly feel) about it, fear and excitement have a very similar physiological reaction. When you are bored with life and start to think about the thing you have been avoiding that is a little scary, don’t you feel your pulse quicken? Fear and boredom are incompatible. The trick is to use the fear to energize yourself and get curious about how you can learn from the situation, rather than letting fear keep you from acting.

When we were growing up, our parents taught us to be afraid of things that they believed were dangerous. Usually with the best intentions, they wanted us to feel fear and pay attention to it as a reason not to do harmful things. The problem is that many of us learned only to feel fear without learning how to use it to make good decisions. We must persistently tell ourselves that fear is heightened energy and awareness, that it allows us to do our best and learn the most in new situations. As the saying goes, “*It’s all right to have butterflies in your stomach. Just get them to fly in formation.*”

Fear provides a good environment for learning—not ideal, but good nonetheless. Most people treat fear as a wall, but it is really just the edge of their comfort zone. Fear is not a wall; it is just an emotion. If you want to learn about fear, whatever it is you fear doing is the very next thing you need to do! Keep in mind, though, the appropriate amount of risk you are ready for at the time.

When you start doing the thing you fear, the fear is used for its true purpose: to provide free energy. Hence the suggestion from Bertrand Russell: “*Feel the fear and do it anyway.*” In her book of the same title, Susan Jeffers states, “If everybody feels fear when approaching something totally new in life, yet so many are out there doing it despite the fear, then we must conclude that fear is not the problem” (1987, p. 33).

When we know something is not physically dangerous, we can go ahead and do it. It may feel uncomfortable, but keep moving one step after another in the direction of doing it. As you move, the energy will transform itself from barrier to blessing. You will have energy, not limitation.

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not the absence of fear.”

Mark Twain

ASSERTIVENESS AND COMMUNICATION

While all the previous material on communication is important, it often takes a degree of assertiveness to put it into action. Learning to be assertive is key to both expressing your opinions and needs and sharing your perspective on life events. Being how you would like to be, whether others approve or not, also requires assertiveness. Assertiveness is presented here because it takes assertiveness to deal with and overcome your fears about communication, and this topic will also be useful throughout the course, given the nature of discussions that will invariably arise when exploring other topics.

Assertiveness Defined

One way to describe **assertive behavior** is as follows: *expression of one’s rights and feelings in a direct manner without violating the rights of others* (Duffy and Atwater, 2011). It is a matter of standing on your own two feet without stepping on someone else’s toes. These statements show the need for balance. Assertiveness should be the middle point on the continuum between passive (or nonassertive) and aggressive behavior.

Passive behavior is not sharing your ideas, thoughts, or feelings when it would be beneficial to do so. Passivity is not responding to obvious provocation, not standing up for your rights, and being overly anxious of others’ criticism or disapproval.

Some authors use the term *nonassertive* in place of passive, but I believe that, in some situations, passive is actually a better word to describe certain behaviors. Some people have difficulties not because they lack certain skills and are nonassertive, but because they are actively engaged in behaviors that don’t help them get what they want. Have you ever heard someone apologize to the very person who is taking advantage of them? One time in a large crowd I unintentionally stepped on someone’s toes, and the person turned to me and said, “I’m sorry.” I had stepped on his toes, but he was apologizing to me. I imagine that this person, having reacted in that way, has difficulty standing up for himself in other situations.

“Accept human differences and limitations. Don’t expect anyone to be perfect. Remember, the other person has a right to be different. And don’t be a reformer.”

David Schwartz

Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behavior Differences

Nonassertive (Passive)	Assertive	Aggressive
Self-denying	Self-enhancing	Self-enhancing at others’ expense
Hurt, anxious	Feels good about self	Hurtful, deprecates others
Allows others to choose	Chooses for self	Chooses for others
Gives power away	Retains power; maximizes the chances of getting what you want	Others try to prevent them from getting what they want

Aggressive behavior involves expressing your feelings through insults, sarcasm, labels, put-downs, or hostile statements and actions. Whether it is direct or indirect, aggressive behavior involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a way that violates others’ right to be treated with basic respect.

What extremely passive and extremely aggressive behavior have in common is that both are unlikely to get a person what he or she wants. In this way, these two ends of the continuum come full circle. Passive people give their power away, and people who are too aggressive are likely to have others react to them by trying to prevent them from getting what they want.

Assertive behavior, in contrast to passive or aggressive behavior, involves describing feelings, thoughts, opinions, and preferences directly to another person in an honest and appropriate manner. The following are characteristics of assertive individuals (Bower and Bower, 1996):

1. They are open and express their feelings.
2. They are confident about expressing their opinions and beliefs.
3. They are capable of being contentious and will stand up for their rights even if it entails a degree of unpleasantness.
4. They act in a manner that shows self-respect and are aware of their own limitations.
5. They aren’t easily persuaded or intimidated and will make up their own minds.

The accompanying chart clarifies the differences among nonassertive (or passive), assertive, and aggressive behaviors.

Assertiveness and Personal Beliefs

There are a number of books on assertiveness, and most give valuable advice on developing assertiveness skills and behavior. There are classics in the field such as *Your Perfect*

Right: A Guide to Assertive Living (Alberti and Emmons, 1986), and *Asserting Yourself* (Bower and Bower, 1996). But, it doesn't matter how much information people are given about assertiveness if they don't believe they have permission to be assertive. *How to Say No without Feeling Guilty: And Say Yes to More Time, More Joy, and What Matters in Life* (Breitman et al., 2001) is especially good at describing the power of our underlying beliefs about getting what we want. Consider the implications in the following example:

One afternoon, the family was out for a drive—Mom and Dad in the front seat and the three children in the back. Suddenly, Sarah, the oldest, blurted out, “Dad, can we have some ice cream?” Dad, somewhat startled, replied, “I don't know; maybe, if you don't bug me about it.” The three children exchanged glances, some more hopeful than others. John, the middle child, nudged Sarah and whispered, “Give him a chance to think about it.” Allison, the youngest, just closed her eyes tight and crossed her fingers.

A little further down the road, Sarah couldn't contain her excitement any longer and again asked, “Please, Dad. We'll be good. Can we have some ice cream?” In an irritated voice, Dad snapped back, “I'm thinking about it! I told you not to keep bothering me!” Mom, staring straight ahead through the windshield, calmly stated, “We do have enough time, and dinner won't be for a while yet.”

Just as the car rounded the next turn, an ice cream store came into view. The children all began bouncing up and down in the back seat. John had just put his hand on Sarah's arm, but it was too late. Sarah had already begun to call out, “There it is! There it is! Can we? Oh, please, let's stop.”

At that point, Dad yelled, “There! Now you've done it! I told you not to keep bothering me. I'll be darned if I'm going to stop now, when you kids don't mind me. Maybe that will teach you a lesson.” Mom, in a voice that was barely audible, stated, “I don't know what lesson that would be.” Sarah began to seethe and mull over possible means of retaliation and crossed her arms while quietly plotting revenge. Allison began rummaging around in her little backpack looking for her favorite dolly and quietly wiped away a tear. John leaned forward slightly and said, “That's OK, I guess we can wait 'til later. There's always next weekend.” The hum of the road and the squeaking of the car were the only noises to fill the familiar silence the rest of the drive home.

Some people believe that the more they ask for or try to get what they want, the less likelihood there is of getting it. Is it any wonder that some people have difficulty believing it is possible to gain new skills that will enable them to be more assertive? In their lives, that wouldn't make any sense. Why try to learn behaviors that would only make your situation worse?

Take Sarah from the ice cream story and add 20 years. For her, that incident and many more like it became transformed into a belief that the more you ask for something, the less chance you have of getting it. If you believed that, what would you start doing? Not asking! As a grown woman she not only stopped asking but also stopped letting people know about her needs and desires altogether. The problem then was that if she knew she wanted something, she always felt that she was going to be disappointed, so eventually she cut off her feelings and desires and stopped letting herself know what she wanted. This was her way of trying to protect herself from the pain of disappointment.

When this woman came in for counseling at age 30, all she knew was that for at least 20 years she had felt a vague sense of uneasiness and dissatisfaction with life. Through counseling she finally realized that she had decided early in life that it was better not to want anything because then she'd never be disappointed. She realized that 20 years of not wanting anything was worse than the disappointment that she was trying to avoid by not wanting anything.

ASSERTIVENESS IN PERSPECTIVE If people don't believe they deserve to get what they want, or don't believe that standing up for themselves is possible or useful, then learning new skills is not going to be of much help. I have known many people who undermined their ability to learn assertiveness skills because assertiveness contradicted their perception of the world. Some people just give up and decide that it's hopeless, that there is no sense in trying when life doesn't work out as they planned. They may give something a halfhearted try, but they passively accept the outcome of whatever happens next. When things don't go their way, they may blame the world. They may even get angry or vindictive when the world doesn't pay off the way they believe it should.

I used to work in a halfway house for adolescents who had been in trouble at home, in school, or with the law (usually a combination of all three). One girl I worked with, who had fairly low self-esteem, used to say at least six times an hour, “No matter what I do, there is no way on God's green earth that I'm ever going to get what I want.” It wasn't surprising to learn that those words were almost verbatim what her mother, who had an impoverished background and was having a rough time in life, used to say. As a result, resolving conflicts with the other girls in the halfway house was usually difficult for this girl. Being assertive was a skill she knew little about.

But, not all people have learned to give up in the face of adversity. There are those who get more tenacious and try harder when things aren't going their way, because they were lucky enough to have learned that they are worthy of getting what they want in life. Those who are fortunate enough to have been taught that they are deserving will find a way to persevere. When dealing with disappointment, instead of thinking, “This is what I expected, just par for the course,” they think “What's wrong here? What else do I need to do to get what I want?”

Assertiveness and persistence often go hand in hand. Some people learn to become the “squeaky wheel” and keep asking until they get what they want. They truly believe that if they keep trying, the world will respond. They have learned that assertiveness and persistence pay off.

Assertiveness and persistence can be taken to extremes, however. Consider the kind of behavior that can be observed at the local grocery store: Some kids just keep making a scene until mom surrenders and gives them whatever they want just to keep them quiet. That isn’t assertive behavior—that is aggressive and obnoxious behavior!

Developing a sense of perspective about getting what you want from other people and the world in general is extremely valuable. It is important to have a balanced approach: to know when to try harder and when to accept life as it is.

Assertiveness Skills

There are a number of approaches to learning assertiveness skills, but almost all of them incorporate ideas from the following list. Note that these suggestions build on a number of familiar topics, such as positive self-talk, observing yourself, and risk-taking.

- **Observe the behavior of others:** Notice people you consider to be assertive. What do they do? How do they look, sound, and act?
- **Observe your own behavior:** What is the difference between the times you have been assertive and the times you haven’t been? Do any of these instances involve the following?
- **Negative self-talk:** Are you assuming catastrophe if you assert yourself, imagining that if you assert yourself and it doesn’t work, something terrible will happen? Do you feel that if you assert yourself you’re being selfish? Counter that self-talk with the knowledge that it is OK to get what you want in life as long as you don’t deprive others of that same opportunity.
- **Wanting to be perfect:** Are you putting too much pressure on yourself to be perfect? Perhaps your goal should be learning to improve, rather than having everyone immediately respond to you differently.
- **Use more “I” statements:** Make a habit of saying “What I want is . . .” and “What I’m feeling is . . .” rather than telling people who you think they are (“you” statements) and what they should do. Adler and Towne (2003) state that “I” language describes the other person’s behavior without making any judgments about its worth. A complete “I” statement has three parts: It describes (a) the other person’s behavior, (b) your feelings, and (c) the consequences the other’s behavior has for you.
- **Make nonverbal and verbal communication parallel:** Even the best “I” statement won’t work unless it is delivered in the right way. If your words

are nonjudgmental but your tone of voice, facial expression, and posture all send “you” messages, a defensive response is likely to follow. The best way to make your actions match your words is to remind yourself before speaking that your goal is to explain how the other’s behavior affects you—not to act like a judge and jury (Adler and Towne, 2003).

- **Rehearse being assertive:** Imagine being the way you would like to be in a particular situation. Practice what you would say and how you would say it.
- **Practice being assertive:** To get better at assertiveness you have to practice. Start off with less threatening people or events. To use the words of Jeffers’s (1987) book title, *feel the fear and do it anyway*.
- **Put it in perspective:** Much of what constitutes assertiveness has to do with who you are and who the person you are dealing with is. Words spoken by one person may not carry the same meaning when spoken by someone else. The 6-foot, 6-inch man who is used to dealing only with other men may need to tone it down when talking to a woman who is 5 feet tall. He may be intimidating and perceived as aggressive because of his size and demeanor. Conversely, some people need to turn up the volume to be perceived as assertive. Notice the response you are getting: If you consistently put others on the defensive, you may be mistaking aggressive behavior for being assertive.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The ways in which new technology is being used are expanding at an incredible rate and are influencing the manner in which we communicate with each other. Online chats and text messages, on the rise for years, are now threatening to eclipse e-mail, much as they already have superseded phone calls (*Oregonian*, March 20, 2011). College professors are using the Internet for online courses, and there are numerous ways in which students and instructors can interact in discussions about the class. Businesses are allowing people to telecommute and work from home. Rather than having face-to-face meetings, people have the option of e-mail, video conferences, and communicating by other options that smart phones now offer. Facebook and other social media sites have redefined how people interact with each other. A tremendous amount of information on a wide range of topics is immediately available on the Internet. There is even a service, “Confession: A Roman Catholic App,” that allows the user of an iPad or iPhone to go to virtual confession and check the box for particular sins (Associated Press, *Oregonian*, February 13, 2011).

The advantages are obvious: speed, accessibility, flexibility, real-time, more conversational, and more casual. But for every advantage there is a potential disadvantage. Our ambiguous feelings about the Internet and online social networks are apparent in cartoons of people sitting across the table from each other setting up a

meeting by texting only to realize that the other person is already there. And, there are jokes like “I love Facebook, but hate having to deal with all the people from my past.”

Let the studies begin. This section presents information from current research on how electronic media are changing how we communicate with each other and the impact of these changes.

Social Networking

We have an ever-increasing number of options for communicating with others. On February 22, 2010, The Nielsen Company published new social media statistics. As of December 2009, the average global consumer spent more than five and a half hours per week on social networking sites. This was up from three hours the previous year. The growth was attributed to two main sites, Facebook and Twitter (Barbierri, 2010; Ostrow, 2010). But, as a result, are we becoming more connected or more isolated from one another? How is all of this electronic communication affecting human relations? There are some advantages to social networking sites. Consider the following:

- Although it is rapidly changing with the availability of video, online dating services provide the opportunity to get to know someone without necessarily knowing what they look like. Sometimes people make snap decisions about another person based on appearance. People who use online dating services report that it is beneficial if they can get to know the other person better by talking before they meet in person.
- Some people report that they actually got to know a person better from being online because they felt safe sharing personal thoughts and feelings in the context of the social network. Anonymity may foster the ability both to make connections and to maintain distance in relationships.
- Facebook has been touted as the instrument to change the world. It is a global communication tool and crosses boundaries to enable people to connect in ways like never before. For example, it has been suggested by numerous sources (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2010) that Facebook was instrumental in bringing about political changes in the Middle East. People were able to have discussions and share information in ways they couldn't in the past. And, Twitter was instrumental in being able to organize rallies and encourage the democracy movement. It is too simple to say that it caused revolutions, but technology played a powerful role in keeping people informed, educated, and connected.

Research is also noting potential dangers such as the following:

- Sherry Turkle, MIT professor and clinical psychologist, wrote a book called *Alone Together* (2011) in which she describes her view of the current situation: “Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we can feel utterly

alone.” Some people have a vast number of superficial relationships—500 Facebook friends—but few deep meaningful relationships where they are truly known.

- People become addicted to being online. There is evidence of people becoming so deeply involved with another person online that they jeopardize their marriages.
- Social networking may reduce us to a stage-managed profile that we hide behind. While it may be true that every day we are all putting up a front to some degree, there is a great temptation and potential to misrepresent yourself online.
- Misrepresentation can be deliberate by predators. In fact, social networking allows predators greater access to potential victims.
- Anonymity can bring honesty, but it can also be used for posting ugly, hurtful, or indecent comments. Open forum sites bring up first amendment issues regarding the kind of speech to be allowed. Many websites are considering options to elevate the content and comments online without having to have some form of censorship.
- The ability to have connections with hundreds of people needs the awareness that what you post on your page may not be what you want viewed by hundreds of people. There is also concern about safety and not having information available that you don't want shared.
- We are increasingly being inundated with spam, misinformation, and scams.
- Not only are people experiencing communication overload in their personal lives, but employers are beginning to be concerned about the cost of unnecessary interruptions. *USA Today* (February 2, 2011) reports that some corporate users are now receiving over a 100 messages a day. And, when people are attending to personal messages as well, the cost to business productivity is expensive.
- Text-based Internet communication creates the potential for misunderstanding, because people can't rely on other cues such as tone of voice or gestures to understand the message (Bucher, 2009).

Whatever the effects of electronic communication, it appears that there will only be an increase in use. There is an often-quoted phrase from Marshall McLuhan (1964): *the medium is the message*. This means that the form of the medium embeds itself in the message such that the medium influences how the message is perceived. This is becoming ever truer with social networking.

Multitasking

Are we learning to be better multitaskers, or is the constant bombardment of information creating or contributing to an increased inability to concentrate on one thing? (Ironically, some researchers and book authors speculate that the information that they are sharing about the effects of the

ever-increasing communication technology may never be read by the very people they are commenting about. Young people seem to be less inclined to read a whole book; they just download the summary from the Internet.)

There have been several significant studies on modern multitasking and its effects on the brain. Here are some of the results:

- Ophir, Nass, and Wagner (2009) looked at whether there are systematic differences in information processing styles between chronically heavy and light media multitaskers. Results showed that heavy media multitaskers are more susceptible to interference from irrelevant environmental stimuli and from irrelevant representations in memory. This led to the surprising result that heavy media multitaskers performed worse on a test of task-switching ability, likely due to reduced ability to filter out interference from the irrelevant task.
- A study from Stanford University (Gorlick, 2009) agrees: “People who are regularly bombarded with several streams of electronic information do not pay attention, control their memory or switch from one job to another as well as those who prefer to complete one task at a time. . . . After putting about 100 students through a series of three tests, the researchers realized those heavy media multi-taskers are paying a big mental price. ‘They’re suckers for irrelevancy . . . everything distracts them’ ” (p. 1).
- Eric Horvitz (2007) found that workers at a software company took 10 to 15 minutes to return to the task they were working on after being interrupted by a phone call, e-mail, or instant message.
- Similar findings come from the Brain, Cognition and Action Laboratory at the University of Michigan. In an interview (Reimer, 2007), David Meyer, the Director of the Lab, concluded, “Multitasking is going to slow you down, increasing the chances of mistakes. Disruptions and interruptions are a bad deal from the standpoint of our ability to process information.”

The bottom line? You’ll get more done with a higher level of quality if you mono-task: work on a single task for an extended period of time. Advice from researchers includes turning off message alerts and checking e-mail and messages only at periodic times during the day.

DIVERSITY, GENDER, AND MULTICULTURALISM

Diversity refers to more than race; there are several dimensions of diversity.

Dimensions of diversity refer to specific traits viewed as distinguishing one person or group from another. Race, gender, and ethnicity are three examples. **Race** refers to a category of people who are *perceived* as physically distinctive on the basis of

certain traits, such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features. Whereas race relates to physical differences, ethnicity focuses on cultural distinctiveness. **Ethnicity** is defined as the consciousness of a cultural heritage shared with other people. Gender has to do with the cultural differences that distinguish males from females (Bucher, 2009, p. 25).

Diversity is an early topic in this book for two reasons. First, as with other topics in this chapter, diversity considerations affect many of the topics throughout the book. An important aspect of human relations is to become more aware of the similarities and differences between people so that we can successfully operate in our increasingly diverse environment. As expressed by Santrock (2006, p. 8):

Even among well-meaning people, diverse ethnic backgrounds may create unexpected obstacles to building relationships or even to carrying on pleasant interactions.

Greater meaning in life can be found through exploring commonalities between groups. “Meaning in life can be found by paying attention to the common ground we all share and by becoming aware of universal themes that unite us in spite of our differences” (Corey and Corey, 2006, p. 428).

So, as with the other overarching topics in this chapter, we introduce basic information here that will be expanded on later.

The second reason diversity is introduced in this chapter is that understanding cultural and gender differences will make us more effective communicators. Therefore, as we cover the material in this section, think about how diversity affects communication in your context. (Though gender differences are part of diversity considerations, the topic of gender and communication had its own section in this chapter to facilitate the presentation of material.)



Diversity and Population Increase

The United States is becoming more diverse. This means that in the future there will be even more need to be able to interact successfully with those from other backgrounds. Consider the following statistics (Hope Yen, Associated Press, *Oregonian*, March 25, 2011; *Seattle Times*, March 27, 2011; *USA Today*, December 22, 2010; *USA Today*, March 28, 2011; *USA Today*, March 30, 2011):

- Initial reports on the 2010 Census indicate that the U.S. population grew by 9.7 percent in the past decade to a total of 308.7 million people. Hispanics accounted for more than half of this increase: 50 million, or one in six Americans. The final census count also included 196.8 million whites, 37.7 million blacks, and 14.5 million Asians.
- In all, racial and ethnic minorities made up about 90 percent of the total U.S. growth since 2000, part of a historic trend in which minorities are expected to become the majority mid-century.
- The U.S. racial and ethnic diversity grew almost everywhere in the past decade. The *USA TODAY Diversity Index* rose to 55 from 49 in the Census 2000. (The index measures the probability that two people chosen randomly are of different races or ethnicities. The index can range from 0—low diversity to 100—high diversity.) In 1990, it was 40. The trend is likely to continue with the arrival each year of about 1 million immigrants, mostly

from Latin America. However, this is the national portrait. The picture is different when looking at a map indicating counties in the country. Most counties have little diversity, but a few hundred have fairly high levels.

- African Americans increasingly left big cities such as Detroit, Chicago, and New York for the suburbs, typically in the South. Michigan and Illinois had their first declines in African American population since statehood, as many of their residents went to the suburbs of places such as Atlanta, Dallas, and Houston.
- More than 9 million Americans checked two or more race categories on their 2010 Census forms, up 32 percent from 2000. In Census 2010, respondents were given the option of choosing one or more races from the following categories: white, black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or *some other race*. Therefore, each category could be reported alone or in combination with one or more. There were also multiple choices under each of the major categories; for example, under *Asian*, respondents could choose *Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or Other Asian*. Offering the option of denoting multiple racial categories is, in itself, an indication of increasing diversity in the United States—in prior censuses respondents didn't have the option of choosing multiple races.

Census Data on Segregation

Results from the 2010 census shed light on increasing diversity and residential patterns in the United States. The following information is from Haya El Nasser, *USA Today*, December 15, 2010 (p. 3A).

"Despite increased racial and ethnic diversity, American neighborhoods continue to be segregated and some of the progress made toward integration since 1980 has come to a halt this decade, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data released Tuesday."

"This is a surprising result," said Brown University sociology professor John Logan, who analyzed 2005–2009 Census numbers. At worst it was expected that there would be continued slow progress . . .

"Logan and his co-author, Florida State University sociologist Brian Stults, also head the US 2010 research project, which examines changes in American society. They found:"

- "The average non-Hispanic white person continues to live in a neighborhood that looks very different from neighborhoods where the average black, Hispanic, and Asian live. Average whites in metropolitan America live in a neighborhood that's 74% white—although it's not as segregated as in 1980, when the average was 88% white."
- "Blacks continue to be the most segregated minority followed by Hispanic and Asians. The average black

American lives in a majority black neighborhood. . . . Much of the decline in segregation in recent decades was due to the rise of the black middle class and its move to suburbia. Harrison expects that the recession, which has cut jobs and reduced mobility, may push segregation rates up again. 'I wouldn't be surprised if the recession had a polarizing effect,' Harrison says . . ."

- "While segregation levels between blacks and whites and between Hispanics and whites are almost the same today as in 2000, the segregation of Asians from whites is now almost as high as whites' segregation from Hispanics."
- "Segregation levels among Hispanics are nearing those of blacks. On average 48% of Hispanics' neighbors are Hispanic and that share is growing, Logan says . . ."
- "'Black-white segregation in most of the country is a residue from blatant exclusion (of blacks) from white neighborhoods' from 1920 to 1970, Logan says. 'Although residential patterns are always partly due to people's preferences of where to live, limited choice continues to be a larger factor for African Americans. Immigrant neighborhoods are more often Asians' and Hispanics' preferred location.'"

- Multiracial Americans now make up 2.9 percent of the U.S. population, a steadily growing group. The vast majority of multiracial Americans lived in California, Texas, New York, and Hawaii. The most numerous race combinations are white-American Indian or Alaskan Native, white-black, and white-“some other race.” In some cases, white Hispanics may be opting to list themselves as multiracial in the “some other race” category, which would put the actual number of multiracial Americans lower than the official tally of 9 million.
- Diversity among children is greater than diversity among adults. In the state of Washington, for example, minorities make up a growing share of the population. More than three fourths of adults—but just 61 percent of the kids—are white. Demographers say the trend for the under 18 population to outpace the adult population in diversity has been going on for several decades. One of the influences has been attributed to birth-control pills. As contraceptives became increasingly available in the mid-1960s, white women chose to have fewer children.

Clearly, the time has come when we need to acknowledge that diversity isn’t an abstract idea, it is a fact. And yet, even as we increase in racial diversity, we still need to address the resulting increase in segregation as various groups look for places to settle.

Historical Reactions to Diversity in the United States

We have long been somewhat confused as a nation about how to deal with the different people and cultures that exist within our boundaries. We strongly support and encourage individuality, while at the same time we expect that everyone should blend in and not make waves. We seem to think that everyone should express their differences—as long as it is in an acceptable way. Perhaps we are guilty of having a double standard. There is the stereotype abroad of the “ugly American” who travels in other countries and refuses to acknowledge or behave according to local customs. Americans tend to take their culture with them and expect that everyone should act more American wherever they go. Yet, when other people come to this country, Americans tend to think that the visitor or immigrant should immediately begin to act as we do in this country.

Mara Hurwitt, in an article entitled “Cultural Diversity: Towards a Whole Society” (Hurwitt, accessed May 2011), states:

People may fear diversity simply because they are accustomed to the way things used to be and change makes them uncomfortable. Others may somehow feel threatened because they perceive increased participation by traditionally underrepresented groups in the workplace and political process as a challenge to their own power. If left

unaddressed, these fears can lead to resentment and bigotry. However, these fears can often be countered through education (p. 1).

American culture has handled diversity differently at different periods in history. In the early 1900s, over 1 million immigrants entered the country each year. These immigrants were expected to assimilate into the general population as quickly as possible. A video biography of Henry Ford, shown on PBS (Tycoon, 2006), gave a visual example of that particular phenomenon. During the early 1900s Ford was instrumental in providing employment for a vast number of immigrants. As part of the training program for working on the assembly line in his factories, Ford had a graduation ceremony. People were dressed in a wide variety of costumes representing various ethnic backgrounds. They all walked across a stage showing their national dress and then proceeded backstage to a changing room. When the people emerged and walked across the stage again, they were all dressed in identical clothing and waving American flags. Perhaps it was analogous to the very production methods that Ford created, and there were certain benefits to uniformity. But, it was also a very visual demonstration of the beliefs of the dominant culture of that time: that America was to be a **melting pot**. The process of becoming an American meant **assimilation**—you gave up your old customs and blended into the new culture.

Currently we appear to be shifting from the time when the melting pot, or assimilation, was embraced, to a **salad bowl** approach that values **pluralism**. Pluralism is a process through which cultural differences are acknowledged and preserved. The melting pot assailed the preservation of individual differences because the pot was dominated by a particular ingredient: American culture. This image differs from that of a tossed salad, which is symbolic of multiculturalism: Each ingredient is visible and not overcome or subsumed (Locke, 1998). Popular sayings such as “different strokes for different folks” and “it takes all kinds to make the world go round” suggest awareness and acceptance of differences.

Currently we’re in the throes of heated debates and mixed reactions to increasing diversity. Diversity represents positive change to some. Noted historian Ronald Takaki, author of *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (1993), believes that we are made stronger by acknowledging all of our different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. Further, he believes that we have always been a diverse culture. It is just that the story of other cultures and ethnic groups has never been told in much detail before. Actually, these stories have sometimes been omitted by the **dominant culture**, which is an example of how power is sometimes expressed.

Some people have a negative reaction to diversity because they fear it will destroy American culture. For example, Allan Bloom, in his book entitled (ironically)

The Closing of the American Mind (1987), takes the position that we are losing something by trying to accommodate all the different cultures. He believes that we should go back to the educational model of teaching the classics and taking a “great books approach” to developing a common culture.

Developing Diversity Consciousness

Regardless of your feelings about the increasing diversity in America, understanding diversity will help you get along better, especially in the workplace. Therefore, in this section, I offer some suggestions for thinking through issues of diversity and developing “diversity consciousness.” Diversity consciousness prepares you for life, empowers you and others, and changes the way you view differences. Here are some things you can do to develop diversity consciousness (Bucher, 2009).

- **Examine yourself and your world:** Before we begin to make sense of other cultures and cultural differences, we need to become aware of who we are. A major focus of this book is on how self-awareness helps to improve human relations.
- **Expand your knowledge of others and their world:** While it is a good start, don’t just focus on a few noteworthy people and events. Try to decrease the social distance between you and those groups or individuals about whom you know very little. Also, look for similarities as well as differences.
- **Step outside yourself:** One way to practice stepping outside yourself is to imagine putting yourself in someone else’s place. The ability to “put yourself in somebody else’s moccasins” increases your awareness, understanding, and diversity skills. How can you actually experience what someone else’s life might be like to some degree?
- **Gauge the level of the playing field:** Social inequality refers to the unequal distribution of resources, such as wealth, power, and prestige. A social class is a category of people who share similar amounts of these. What is your experience with poverty or class discrimination? Do you assume that if one person can succeed, anybody can?
- **Check up on yourself:** How are your critical thinking skills? Can you freely question and evaluate ideas and information? Is your behavior consistent with your thinking?
- **Follow through on new behavior:** We learn by doing. We can only develop and refine diversity skills through constant use and self-evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGING AND OVERCOMING DIVERSITY BARRIERS As you pursue diversity consciousness, you may encounter barriers.

- **Barrier 1—Limited Perceptions:** Perceptions refer to the way in which we receive and interpret

information from our senses. We have all had times when we experienced “seeing what we wanted to see,” when we had high expectations that an event would turn out a certain way. This is also called selective perception. If we believe that certain people are going to act a particular way, we may only notice the things that support that belief.

- **Barrier 2—Ethnocentrism:** This refers to the assumption that our way of thinking and acting is naturally superior to any other. Sometimes culture envelops us so completely that it is difficult to realize that our perspective is one of many.
- **Barrier 3—Stereotypes:** Our social environment provides us with a set of images, many of which are stereotypes. These are unverified overgeneralizations that we associate with a group of people.
- **Barrier 4—Prejudice:** This is an irrational and inflexible opinion, formed on the basis of limited and insufficient knowledge. Stereotypes and prejudice often go hand in hand.
- **Barrier 5—Prejudice Plus Power:** When people in power show prejudice, the consequences can be that much more severe. The various “isms” are at work when we talk about prejudice plus power: ageism, sexism, racism, and classism.

DEVELOPING DIVERSITY SKILLS We all have certain barriers that we have experienced in communicating with other people. Beginning to become more respectful and understanding of people from another culture or ethnic background requires a new set of skills. **Diversity skills** are those competencies that allow people to interact with one another in a way that respects and values differences. Diversity skills such as communication, teamwork, and self-evaluation are key components of diversity consciousness. As you read about the following skills, examine yourself. Which are your strengths? Which need a little more work? What might you do to improve certain skills?

- **Flexible thinking:** This is the ability to understand and adapt to a variety of perspectives, depending on the situation.
- **Ability to maintain pride in one’s background and culture:** Research suggests that students are far more successful if they maintain pride in their culture (Nieto, 1992).
- **Ability to network and learn from everyone and anyone:** We increase our chances for success, in school and at work, by expanding and diversifying our social network.
- **Ability to deal effectively with barriers:** We may encounter barriers to understanding others, either from our expectations of others or from our own beliefs. When faced with such barriers, can you get in touch with the side of yourself that becomes more determined in the face of obstacles?

Conclusion

The implications from this information are clear. We live in an increasingly diverse society and, for better or worse, will be working and playing together. Human relations skills need to be expanded to encompass the ability to understand and communicate with people of all races and

ethnic backgrounds. Learning to deal with people from diverse backgrounds is a requirement, not an option.

Along with learning new skills, beginning to embrace the inevitable changes in our national demographic gives us the opportunity to develop personally. And isn't that what a good human relations course is all about?

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- There are basic psychological principles that if understood and applied will affect your ability to communicate effectively, improve your ability to get along with others, make you more productive, and give you a greater chance for happiness.
- Paying attention to how you communicate with yourself (self-talk) is important for overcoming fears, addressing shyness, and becoming more assertive.
- The greater the number of behavioral choices you have, the more able you will be to accomplish what you want and live a satisfying, healthy, balanced life.
- Self-examination is extremely useful and *everyone* can benefit from it in order to increase satisfaction in life.
- Electronic communication has some positive aspects, but research also shows that there are things we need to be careful of. One of these is the inability of humans to multitask well.

Chapter Review

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Ten building blocks represent concepts that will be referenced throughout this text. They provide information for understanding human behavior in a number of contexts. Concepts such as double standards, paradox, catch-22, and playing the devil's advocate apply to topics and behaviors that are introduced in later chapters.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Learning how to connect with people by improving your ability to listen as well as to speak will enhance communication. When discussing topics in small groups or large groups, think about building bridges rather than walls.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is virtually impossible not to communicate. Body language and nonverbal communication are important. What we don't say may communicate as much as what we do say. How you say something is just as important as what you say.

SELF-TALK

Negative internal dialogue limits your behavior. Numerous experts in the field of human potential suggest methods such as affirmations for increasing your positive thoughts. What you say to yourself about your abilities affects your behavior, so it is important to observe that internal process.

SHYNESS

Many people experience shyness in some situations. Fear of public speaking is particularly common. When you analyze the situation and are more aware of your self-talk, you can begin to improve your self-esteem as well as your social skills.

OVERCOMING FEAR

Fear and excitement produce similar physical reactions. Once you start an activity that is anxiety provoking, it often becomes easier to deal with. We are all afraid at times, but it is important to understand fear and then channel it in a manner that doesn't limit our behavior.

ASSERTIVENESS

Before learning assertiveness skills, it is important to examine your beliefs about what it means to get what you want, what you think will happen if you are assertive, and whether you feel deserving. Some people believe that the squeaky wheel gets the grease; others think that the more they ask, the less they get. Being assertive means standing up for yourself without taking away others' rights. Part of learning appropriate new behaviors comes from understanding the balance between being aggressive and being passive. To be more assertive, you can analyze the behavior of others, analyze your own behavior, rehearse being assertive, and start to practice assertiveness. All are easier when you watch your self-talk and use more "I" statements to describe your desires and needs.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Electronic communication is increasing exponentially and will have a major impact on interpersonal relations. Some of these impacts will be positive, but there is potential for negative consequences as well. There has been a lot of research on multi-tasking, showing that *no-one* is good at it because of the way our brains work. The consensus is that we should mono-task to produce efficiency and quality of work.

DIVERSITY, GENDER, AND MULTICULTURALISM

On a certain level, we all have entirely unique experiences of the world. Therefore, appreciating diversity is a concept important for everyone, regardless of race, gender, or culture. The goal

of multicultural education is to recognize and appreciate that differences exist among people. It is important to learn more about how these differences affect our behavior and influence our interactions with other people.

Website Resources

Diversity:

www.everybody-democracy.org

Race data:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/race.html>

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE):

<http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/research/crede>

The Shyness Institute: Offers network resources, including articles, associations, and agencies, for people seeking information and services for shyness:

<http://www.shyness.com>

The effects of multitasking:

<http://www.umich.edu/~bcalab/multitasking.html>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* to help understand what to do.

1. What would you like to learn from your human relations class? What changes are you interested in making? What actions are you willing to take to accomplish those goals? If you were to learn what you hope for from the course, how would your life be different?
2. From the section on *Basic Principles*, what are some examples of how you have done things that made a situation worse rather than better? What are some double standards

that you have? Do you have a tendency to play devil's advocate? What behaviors do you know you need to do more often, and which ones do you need to do less often?

3. Using the *Group Discussion and Oral Communication* rubric, what are your communication strengths? What skills should you practice? In what ways could you improve, and what would it take to do that? How could you *build bridges rather than walls* in your group discussions?
4. Describe differences you have noticed in the manner in which men and women communicate. How has this affected you?
5. How has your self-talk affected your communication with others?
6. Where, when, and in what circumstances have you experienced shyness? How would you look, sound, and feel if you were to act more in accord with your desires? What has been your objection to acting in that manner? What would need to change to enable you to act how you would like to?
7. What, when, and in what circumstances have you felt you were not assertive enough? What are three things you could do to try to stand up for yourself in the future?
8. What did you learn from the section on *Electronic Communication*? What have you noticed about your own electronic communication use and how it affects your productivity? What might you want to change?
9. What did you learn from the section on diversity? What are some of the diversity skills that you could practice to improve your relations with people of different backgrounds?
10. What part of the chapter had the greatest impact on you? What did it remind you of regarding your experiences in interacting with other people? What stories could you share about how you intend to use the material in the chapter to improve your human relations skills?

Journal Rubric

Trait	Green Light	Red Flag
Understands Concepts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information is accurate 2. Terms are used correctly 3. Examples and counterexamples are relevant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Struggles to provide ideas or support for ideas, or ideas are hard to understand 2. Terms are used incorrectly 3. It is hard to understand how examples and counterexamples are relevant to the topic being discussed
Application to Self	<p>Strong application to self is indicated by the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the first person (“me,” “I”) 2. Specific description of what was learned: refers to concepts in the text 3. Analysis of one’s own behavior in light of the concepts in the chapter and/or examples of how various concepts reflect one’s own experiences: “Here’s how this chapter was useful to me” and/or “Here’s an example from my life . . .” 4. Description of one’s reaction to and self-talk during class activities 5. Reactions and opinions regarding the chapter content: likes, dislikes, and reasons why 6. Sincere 	<p>Weak application to self is indicated by the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not in the first person (“other people”) 2. General, vague, or abstract description of content 3. Little analysis of one’s own behavior in light of the concepts in the chapter and/or little description of how the ideas might be useful in one’s own life; high school book report: “Here are the points made in the book, but I won’t discuss how they relate to myself or how useful they are to me” 4. Little description of one’s reaction to and self-talk during class activities 5. No conclusion or irrelevant conclusion 6. Insincere; “I need to do this to get the grade, but I won’t really think about how the information might apply to myself”
Writing	<p>It is readable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not too many spelling errors 2. Capitals at the beginning of sentences and periods at the end; the reader can tell where one sentence ends and next begins 3. Like ideas are placed together; an indent is used to show where one set of related ideas ends and the next begins; easy to outline 4. Neat enough to read 	<p>It is difficult to read:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. So many misspellings that it’s hard to determine the words being used 2. Can’t tell where one sentence ends and the next begins 3. Can’t tell when one thought ends and the next begins; like ideas are scattered; dissimilar ideas are together; cannot be easily outlined 4. Messiness makes it hard to read

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2

SELF-AWARENESS

If asked to write three things that we like about ourselves, some of us might take half an hour to do so, yet take only 10 minutes to list 10 things we don't like about ourselves.

Why is that? Imagine how different life would be if we all had a ready list of our positive attributes, but had to take some time before coming up with a list of unproductive self-criticism and put-downs.

What happens during our development that makes it difficult to think of ourselves in a positive way? We seem to have a culturally conditioned opinion that people who think well of themselves are egomaniacs. Yet, the movers and shakers in the world, those who make things happen and accomplish great deeds, usually have positive attitudes about their abilities. Even in everyday situations, the people who are doing well in life seldom spend much time thinking negative thoughts about themselves. To lead a productive life, it is extremely important to regard ourselves and our abilities in a positive way. Having a positive view of oneself is *not* the same as being an egomaniac with a swelled head. People who have a strong need to convince others of how great they are seldom truly feel that way. People with true self-esteem can enjoy their accomplishments and the attention from others, but they can also share the limelight.

Discussion This chapter is about how to attain the goal of feeling good about yourself. Essential to reaching that goal is self-awareness—learning about self-concept and how it develops, learning about appropriate self-disclosure, and developing the ability to look at the parts of yourself that you keep hidden. In looking behind the mask, you can begin to discover and appreciate the real you.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 2

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Define *self-concept*. How does self-concept differ from *self-esteem*? Give an example of each.
2. Describe the three *dimensions of the self*. What is *congruence* when talking about the dimensions of the self and how does it relate to positive self-esteem?
3. What are *self-defeating behaviors*?
4. Describe how self-concept and self-esteem develop.
5. What is the difference between good self-esteem and narcissism?
6. Describe the four common myths about perfectionism.
7. Describe the various methods to improve self-esteem, including cognitive restructuring.
8. What are *internal* and *external locus of control*? What is the most important thing you can do to develop an internal locus of control and thereby improve self-esteem?
9. Regarding social penetration and depth of self-disclosure, what are the stages of interaction?
10. What is the goal of using the *Johari Window* to explore the self? Describe the four parts of the Johari Window.
11. What are the benefits of becoming acquainted with your *Shadow Self*?
12. Describe the outcomes of wearing masks.
13. How does the manner in which you get attention interact with self-esteem? Describe the characteristics of a *power victim*.
14. In the section *Physical Contact*, what are the different categories of touch? Why is touch important?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Socrates

SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

Definitions

SELF-CONCEPT **Self-concept** is the set of perceptions you have about the different aspects of yourself and your abilities. It is your internal mental image of yourself and the collection of beliefs about what kind of person you are. Psychologist and philosophers have discussed and debated the various aspects of the self for years. Although there are a great many constructs regarding which elements to include, there are common themes and concepts that appear in research repeatedly. Many theories about self-concept contain elements of the following (Buss, 2001):

- **Social identity:** This includes the part of you that interacts with others and may rate yourself in relation to other people. It also includes a sense of belonging in the world and may influence your comfort level around others.
- **Physical identity:** This aspect of yourself is the degree of comfort about your body, appearance, and/or your athletic abilities.
- **Mental self:** How you feel and what you believe about your cognitive abilities and capacity for logic and reason. This may include how you feel about your ability to make decisions.
- **Emotional self:** The feelings you have, or allow yourself to have, and how you express those feelings. This includes your ability to control your emotions when it is appropriate.
- **Spiritual self:** The part of you that connects to something greater than yourself. This may be the basis for your values and the meaning you assign to life. Spirituality is more internally defined than religious affiliation and may serve to connect you to the greater universe.

For example, in the area of *social self* you might see yourself as friendly and outgoing, or you might see yourself as shy and timid. In the area of *physical self* you might see yourself as physically strong but having a body that is out of proportion, or you might see yourself as physically weak but cute.

A bit of complication is added because how you see yourself on these aspects of self-concept might vary as you consider different **dimensions of the self: public, private, and ideal**. The person you are in public—your *public self*—and the person you are in private—your *private self*—might be different. Further complicating the situation is that how you’d really like to be—your *ideal self*—might be at odds with your public and private selves.

- **Your private self:** How you perceive yourself to be with all your thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams. These are what you express to yourself and may know about yourself, but they may differ from how others think of you.
- **Your public self:** The different parts of yourself that you present to the world, including the roles, images, and masks that you sometimes adopt. Social pressures and interactions influence a great deal of your behaviors.
- **Your ideal self:** How you would like to be and the changes you would like to make in yourself. Some people have very high standards and expectations for themselves, which may influence their behavior in public or private.

For example, consider the mental self. I knew a man who presented himself publicly as all-knowing, but his private self was wracked with self doubt. The incongruence was heightened by his ideal self, who felt it was unacceptable if he didn’t know the answer to everything. Or consider the social self. One’s ideal self might say that “It’s important to be lively and engaging at a dinner party.” So that person would try to make his public self more congruent with his ideal self by providing lots of entertaining conversation. However, his private self may feel more comfortable being more reserved.

One way to develop an accurate self-appraisal is to imagine each self as a circle, and then imagine the three circles in relationship to each other. How big would each circle be, and how much would each one overlap with the others? Look at the accompanying diagram, and then draw the circles to represent what you have learned about yourself.

A number of psychologists, including Karen Horney, have done research using this method for determining an individual’s self-concept. They have concluded that the degree of **congruence** (overlap and similarity) between the circles is related to positive self-concept. Carl Rogers, a famous humanistic psychologist, believed that adjustment is more likely to occur when the various aspects of the self are congruent. In other words, you feel better about yourself when the way you are in public, how you are privately, and what your ideal self would be like are all fairly similar.

As you look at your diagram, consider how you would like to be different and what it would take.

SELF-ESTEEM **Self-esteem** is how you feel about yourself based on your perceptions about who you are, and it is reflected in your belief about what is possible to accomplish in the world. Self-esteem is the evaluative and emotional component of self-concept. For example, you

“The display of status symbols is usually the result of low self-esteem. The self-confident person can afford to project a modest image.”

H. Jackson Browne

might see yourself as brainy (self-concept) and you like it (self-esteem), or you might see yourself as timid in social situations (self-concept) and dislike it (self-esteem).

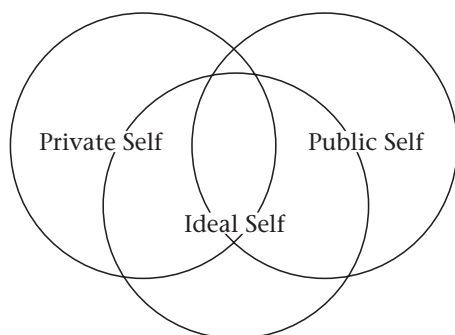
According to Nathaniel Brandon (2000), self-esteem is more than the **innate** sense of self-worth and the spark that therapists and educators try to nurture into flame. It is the full realization that we matter and that we are up to the challenges of life.

Importance of Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Why are self-concept and self-esteem so important? Low self-esteem is blamed for a number of societal ills these days. After years of working with people in the field of counseling and education, I can say that a major source of problems for many people is lack of belief in themselves and their basic self-worth. This idea is supported by numerous researchers who reviewed outcome studies on psychotherapy. They concluded that counseling does have a positive influence on clients and that raising self-esteem may be one of the most important outcomes (Bower, 2005).

Self-esteem affects almost all aspects of life, including the ability to communicate and communication style, willingness to learn and perform tasks, and ability to enter into and maintain healthy relationships. Freud said that a good sign of mental health is the ability to love and to work. A healthy self-esteem is a prerequisite for both.

Another example of the importance of self-concept and self-esteem is its influence on the “self-fulfilling prophecies” in our lives. Have you ever watched a friend create a difficult situation for himself that you, from the sidelines, could see was totally unnecessary? You knew something negative was going to happen, yet he seemed intent on carrying out an ill-conceived plan because he believed it to be his only possible option. When we think negative things about ourselves, we often cause negative things to happen, sometimes without even being aware of it. These are called **self-defeating behaviors**—a topic that will be dealt with more in a future chapter. A belief that we don’t deserve to have good things happen to us will definitely affect our behavior. The cycle continues when bad things do in fact happen because of our behavior, and these adverse situations reinforce our belief that “this is the way life is” and we can’t change it. Luckily, improved self-esteem can interrupt this negative cycle.



Thought Question 2.1

How much do the circles overlap in your self-assessment? What would it take to have them be more congruent? What did you learn from doing this exercise?

Sources of Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

We aren’t born with beliefs about who we are or what we deserve in life. Self-worth develops from interactions with our surrounding world. Well-researched studies of self-esteem (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006) conclude that the major portion of this foundation is laid during interactions between parent and child. A child who is wanted, loved, and appreciated will do much better in the world than one who is not. You don’t have to be a psychologist to observe this principle in action—just visit a park or a grocery store and observe parent–child interactions.

For example, one day while sitting in a park with my family, I listened to a father yell at his toddler, who had taken off running and ignored his father’s order to stop. When the father chased the child down, he began a tirade full of statements about the child’s worth, such as, “You no-good brat, I’ll teach you to listen,” and, “You’re a bad boy; I’m tired of you being such a problem.” The sad part was that this child was probably new to walking and only had forward gear. It looked like he continued to run only because he couldn’t stop and was actually trying to keep his balance. More than likely, the poor kid didn’t understand half the words being said to him, but he got the message that he wasn’t worth much.

“Not in time, place, or circumstance, but in the person lies success.”

Charles Rouse

Self-esteem develops primarily from the following three areas (Hanna, 2003, p. 16):

1. **Social information and interactions:** All the messages we receive while growing up—about who we are and what we are capable of doing—have an influence on our self-esteem. Messages that say we are wonderful and talented are uppers, while those that limit our belief in our potential abilities are downers.
2. **Social comparisons:** These happen when we look around us and make decisions based on how we think we compare to others. Sometimes, the evaluations are realistic and/or useful, but more often, we have judged ourselves unfairly because we have chosen impossible standards. When a person watches a basketball player who is 7 feet tall, and then decides he doesn't measure up because he is only 5 feet, 6 inches, tall, that is an unfair expectation. Seven-foot-tall people hardly represent a realistic basis for comparison. We sometimes impose equally absurd standards on ourselves regarding our abilities.
3. **Self-observation:** This is often a combination of and/or a reaction to the previous categories. Thoughts can have a major impact on behavior: It's not what happens to us, but what we think about what happens to us. When some people encounter difficulties in life, they dig in and try harder; others seem to give up at the first sign of trouble. One person, on hearing a rude comment about herself, might think, "I wonder what's wrong with the person who said that?" Another might respond to that same comment with,

"What's wrong with me?" It is useful to monitor the kinds of thoughts we have about ourselves because it is one way to begin to improve our self-esteem.

High Self-Esteem Versus Narcissism

Although feeling good about yourself is valuable, problems can arise when people have a view of themselves that is overinflated or grandiose. People who feel good about themselves are usually confident, stable, and secure. They don't usually overreact to criticism. The people who truly have high self-esteem are not likely to become aggressive when their ego is threatened by someone else's evaluation of them.

Narcissism, on the other hand, is characterized by an overinflated sense of self: self-esteem that is too high and is unsupported by the facts. Narcissistic people spend a great deal of time telling themselves how important they are and have a grandiose sense of their accomplishments. They are preoccupied with their needs and feel that they deserve special treatment. They have an unreasonable sense of entitlement. They lack empathy and are often seen as arrogant.

Baumeister (1999) speculates that narcissists can become hostile and aggressive when they experience threats to their ego and their view of themselves. According to Weiten and Lloyd (2006), "These findings have important practical implications. Most rehabilitation programs for spousal abusers, delinquents, and criminals are based on the faulty belief that these individuals suffer from low self-esteem. In opposition to this view, current research suggests that efforts

Case Studies and Student Stories

All too many children have to grow up in an environment where there is violence, lack of proper caretaking, and drug or alcohol problems. Some of these children develop poor self-esteem and, incredibly, even mistakenly believe that they might in some way be to blame for their situation.

How does such a thing occur? It is a strange paradox that it might actually be reassuring for the children to think that in some way they are to blame for their circumstances—in a twisted form of logic, they might even feel a little more in control.

Imagine that little Susie looks up at her parents and decides that they are really "crazy." She may be correct in assessing the situation, and the fact that she is being treated very badly may have nothing to do with her. Being mistreated may be more a reflection of the parents, in some cases. But, if she decides "I'm OK" and "they are the crazy ones," what then? She might have 10 more years that she has to live with "monsters." Thinking that the problem is with her parents may be more frightening because then there is no reason for why she is being treated badly—after all, she didn't do anything. And if there is no sense to how she is being treated, how can she do anything about it? It produces anxiety for a child to think that the people in charge are not in control.

Contrast that decision with blaming herself for how she is being treated and for the problems in the family. Although

that is an incorrect assessment of the situation, it might be a less anxiety-provoking position. If Susie thinks that the reason she is being mistreated is because of something she has done, then at least the unpleasantness of her circumstances makes sense: "She gets treated badly because she is bad" has a certain kind of logic. And if she is the problem, then there is some hope: Maybe she can figure out what will get her parents to treat her better. She retains an element of control by thinking that, if she really tries hard, she might be able to get them to care about her.

This is one explanation of how a person might come to an incorrect assumption of self-worth: It might have served the function of self-preservation while growing up. The problem comes when the person forgets to reassess self-worth when finally out of the original situation. What had been an attempt at making sense of life in a crazy situation might become the source of difficulty in adulthood.

A number of people go through life thinking poorly of themselves because of this well-intentioned strategy of blaming oneself. What was once an attempt to make life bearable may make things more unpleasant at another point in life. It is important to explore the origins of one's self-concept, because there may be some incorrect assumptions. For many people, not liking themselves may be a case of mistaken identity.

Assess Your Own Level of Self-Esteem

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Are you easily hurt by criticism? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 2. Are you very shy or overly aggressive? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 3. Do you try to hide your feelings from others? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 4. Are you able to laugh at (and learn from) your own mistakes? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 5. Do you fear close relationships? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 6. Do you find excuses for refusing to change? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 7. Do you look for and tackle new challenges? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 8. Do you wish you could change your physical appearance? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 9. Do you give yourself credit when credit is due? | yes ___ no ___ |
| 10. Are you happy for others when they succeed? | yes ___ no ___ |

Answer key: 1 = N; 2 = N; 3 = N; 4 = Y; 5 = N; 6 = N; 7 = Y; 8 = N; 9 = Y; 10 = Y; 8–10 = good self-esteem; 7–8 = take on a new challenge; 0–6 = get help

to boost already inflated self-esteem are misguided; a better approach is to help such individuals develop more self-control and more realistic views of themselves.”

High Self-Esteem versus Perfectionism

There is a big difference between a healthy pursuit of excellence and perfectionism. There are some people who have a healthy drive to achieve, and others who are absolutely driven. Healthy strivers take genuine pleasure in trying to meet high standards. They enjoy the process as well as the outcome. They set high standards, but make them attainable. They keep normal anxiety and fear of disapproval within bounds, and they are able to see mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning.

Perfectionists on the other hand are full of self-doubts and fears. They tend to believe that everything will be fine if they can just do everything right. They may become anxious if something isn't up to their standards. They may have trouble accepting human imperfections or demand the same level of commitment from others around them. Perfectionists never seem to be satisfied and may be overly depressed when faced with disappointment. Mistakes are evidence of unworthiness, and perfectionists tend to become overly defensive when criticized.

There is a price to pay for perfectionism. Misdirected energy can lead to being compulsive and obsessive behavior and can lead to anxiety in a number of settings: performance, test taking, and even social situations. The paradox is that perfectionism usually ends up with the person being less efficient rather than more.

In confronting perfectionism, it is important to observe your self-talk because many of the beliefs about

how to achieve are based on myths. Some of the myths that perfectionists have a tendency to believe are:

1. Perfectionism leads to success. **Reality:** Perfectionists fail to realize that if success has been achieved it's due to other things besides their compulsive striving.
2. Perfectionists get things done, and they do them right. **Reality:** Perfectionists often have problems with procrastination and missed deadlines.
3. Perfectionists are determined to overcome all obstacles to success. **Reality:** Perfectionists are vulnerable to depression, writer's block, and social anxiety.
4. Perfectionists just have a strong desire to please others. **Reality:** Perfectionists may be driven by low self-esteem, so their needs ultimately blind them to the needs and wishes of others.

Often, the self-inflicted pressure to be perfect is an attempt to be a better person. Here are several coping strategies that will help replace perfectionistic habits with healthier behavior.

1. Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of trying to be perfect.
2. Increase your awareness of the self-critical nature of all-or-nothing thoughts, and how they extend to other people in your life.
3. Be realistic about what you can do. Set reasonable goals.
4. Set strict limits on each of your projects. When the time is up, move on to another activity.
5. Learn how to deal with criticism. Don't take it personally, even when it is.

Self-Esteem, Race, and Culture

For many years, research on self-esteem indicated that many ethnic and racial groups had poor self-esteem when compared to whites. More recently, research indicates that African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans have equally positive self-esteem. This may be due in part to the movement that started during the 1960s emphasizing ethnic pride. This emphasis on the richness of various

“Self-reliance is the greatest gift a parent can give a child.”

Virginia Satir

cultures appears to have improved the self-esteem of ethnic minority groups (Walker and Brokaw, 2011). So, the shift from the “melting pot” philosophy—where everyone was expected to fit in—to the “salad bowl” analogy of honoring the different elements of the whole has had an impact on the self-esteem of minorities. Bucher (2009) found that the highest self-esteem is found in minority individuals who have both a strong sense of their culture of origin and a positive sense of adaptation to mainstream culture.

Improving Self-Esteem

One of the best ways to improve self-esteem is to succeed at something. Self-esteem follows success; it's not the case that one's self-esteem has to improve before one can succeed. This may be a classic case of putting the cart before the horse. We can't make kids feel good about themselves unless we give them something to feel good about. Self-esteem researcher Susan Harter (1999) believes that enhancement programs that target self-esteem itself—where individuals are simply encouraged to feel good about themselves—are often ineffective. Empty praise doesn't work because students see through it. Harter believes that interventions should target the sources of self-esteem. Praising a student's efforts and willingness to take on the challenge of learning something new might be more beneficial in the long run.

I have seen several examples of how empty praise is ineffective in influencing self-esteem in my own children. I've been to numerous events where an award was handed out to everyone who participated in an event, in an effort to make sure no one suffered a decrease in self-esteem. On one occasion I said to my son, “That's great, you got an award. What is it for?” He responded with, “Oh, they give something to everyone, it's really nothing.” And he threw it in the trash.

You can use small successes in this course to improve your self-esteem. When you learn something new, don't you feel better about yourself? Isn't it exciting to attempt a difficult task and succeed? And doesn't that success make the next attempt a little easier? While it is true that taking risks can lead to setbacks or negative experiences, these can be useful, too, if you build strength as you learn to deal with adversity. Nathaniel Brandon (1994) describes the following six broad concepts and general ideals that will allow you to have these small successes:

1. **The practice of living consciously:** When you live consciously, you do not imagine that your feelings are an infallible guide to truth.
2. **The practice of self-acceptance:** Self-acceptance is the refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with yourself.
3. **The practice of responsibility:** Accept responsibility for your own life. No one owes you the fulfillment of your wishes.
4. **The practice of self-assertiveness:** Self-assertiveness means the willingness to stand up for

yourself, to openly be who you are, to treat yourself with respect in all human encounters.

5. **The practice of living purposefully:** Living purposefully means that you pursue goals that you generate for yourself, rather than measuring your achievements by someone else's standards.
6. **The practice of personal integrity:** When you behave in ways that conflict with your judgment of what is appropriate, you lose face in your own eyes. Maintaining personal integrity means that your behavior matches your own internal standards.

Then Brandon gives the following guidelines for how to attain the above ideals:

- **To be how you want to be, start with where you are:** Refuse to be in an adversarial relationship with yourself. Be willing to stand up for yourself and to treat yourself with respect.
- **Walk the talk:** Choose how you want to function and begin to live accordingly.
- **Set realistic goals:** Be cautious about trying to be too much of your ideal self if that creates some kind of perfectionist torture game. The objective is to feel better, not worse. Set fewer goals, make fewer commitments, and keep them.
- **Concentrate on your strengths and demonstrate them:** Focus on how you can use those abilities more, and get involved in situations where your strengths can be an advantage in learning new skills. Look for areas where growth potential and talent overlap. Make a plan and start putting it into action.
- **Make positive changes in your lifestyle:** Feeling better physically, by changing how you eat, getting more sleep, or exercising more, will give you more energy and desire to make emotional or psychological changes.
- **Watch your “self-talk”:** What thoughts are affecting how you experience the world? How accurate or valid are they?

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING Building on the concept of “watch your self-talk” in the last section (as well as similar material presented in Chapter 1), a good place to begin making specific changes and improving self-esteem is to take a closer look at your own thought processes. It is sometimes difficult to begin to think positive thoughts until you have addressed the source of the negative ones. A therapeutic technique for beginning to address negative self-talk is to give a name to the inner critic. What would you call the part of you that is overly critical or demanding? Personifying the critic helps begin to externalize the self-accusing voice (McKay and Fanning, 2000). For example, I've had clients who have called their inner critic “Crazy Lady,” “Worried Man,” and “Unreasonable Tyrant.”

Before coming up with an answer to the critic, it can be useful to consider if there is any positive function that it serves (more will be discussed about this in the section on the change process in Chapter 8). Sometimes the inner critic just needs to find a new way of accomplishing its positive function.

The other important concept to understand about the negative self-talk of the inner critic is that we sometimes get a reward from listening to that voice. If we don't believe that we can accomplish a certain goal, then there is no use even beginning to work toward it. Sometimes we believe things about our abilities—or lack thereof—in order to avoid any possibility of not doing well. If you don't ever try anything new, at least you won't fail . . . or at least it seems that way in the moment.

Thought Distortions A number of great psychologists, counselors, and educators, including McKay and Fanning (2000), have addressed the concept of identifying **thought distortions**. Distortions can be at the root of the difficulty in developing positive self-esteem. Part of any therapy or treatment program includes a component on examining troubling beliefs. The more you are aware of these types of thoughts, the more choices you have for beginning to change the thoughts that tend to contribute to negative feelings.

The following are some common thought processes that can cause problems (Burns, 1999):

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.
- **Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
- **Filtering:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
- **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities don't count.
- **Jumping to conclusions:** You conclude that things are bad without any definite evidence. You do this by (a) mind reading—assuming people are reacting negatively to you and (b) fortune-telling—predicting that things will turn out badly.
- **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way out of proportion or you shrink their importance.
- **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: “I feel like an idiot, so I must be one.”
- **Global labeling:** Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I'm a jerk” or “I'm a loser.”
- **Blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that you contributed to a problem.

Few of us haven't been guilty of one or more of these thought patterns, but lapsing occasionally into one or two of these limiting ways of thinking is different from using a significant number to a great degree.

David Burns wrote an excellent book, *Ten Days to Self-Esteem* (1999b), that provides specific exercises to begin to change your thought patterns. He strongly supports the notion that “you feel the way you think.” You can improve your self-esteem by monitoring your reactions to various events throughout the day. One activity that he suggests is to keep a daily mood log. If you have an upsetting event, write down the negative thought and then label it using the list above. Having done that, consider what would be an appropriate positive thought to replace the negative one. Practicing this process can lead to more positive self-esteem.

Identifying thought distortions is important because these distortions are often the weapon of choice of the inner critic. Beginning to refute the critic may mean questioning the very logic of the critical voice that is nagging at you. Another way to refute the critic is to develop a **healthy voice** that can counter any negative thinking. What is it that you want or need to think in order to feel better about yourself?

Sometimes the internal critic is so strong that there is little room for the healthy voice. In that case, it is important to employ **thought-stopping** procedures. McKay and Fanning (2000) have a technique they call Howitzer Mantras. They suggest that when you hear negative self-talk you respond with statements such as “These are lies,” “This is poison,” “Shut up,” “Screw you, asshole,” “Stop this garbage,” and “Get off my back.” Screaming these types of statements internally (you may appear rather odd if you yell these things while standing on the street corner) can be an effective way of interrupting negative self-talk long enough to enable the healthy voice to counter with a more accurate statement. Self-esteem is more than just recognizing your positive qualities, though; it is an attitude of acceptance and nonjudgment toward yourself and others. So, if you have difficulty identifying your strengths or developing an accurate self-assessment, try viewing yourself as friends or loved ones see you. What would someone who holds you in high regard have to say about your strengths or positive traits? What would be on their list?

It is important to have a list of things you like about yourself because this provides a means of coping with life's trials and tribulations. Most people don't function well when they are under pressure. When life is going along fine, it is easy to have lots of choices and to think good things about ourselves. Choices start to decrease under stress, however, and it becomes harder to remember positive things about our abilities. Therefore, we all need to have a large supply of positive things to think about ourselves when life is going well, so as to have a reserve on hand for bad days.

LOCUS OF CONTROL AND SELF-ESTEEM **Locus of control** is a construct developed by psychologists to describe certain patterns of behavior that appear to not only affect self-esteem but also affect one's ability to improve one's self-esteem. That's why I address locus of control here.

Some people have an **internal locus of control**, which means that the individual believes he or she has control over life events. People who have an internal locus of control believe that their effort makes a difference, so they are more likely to take action and attempt to cope with situations that arise. *Internals* are less likely to blame others or past events for their limitations in life. The good news about believing that you have responsibility for the outcome of your life is that even when you have created a bad situation, you still have the ability to do something about it. It also stands to reason that you can create your own joy and happiness.

Other people appear to have an **external locus of control**, which means that the individual believes that some outside force such as fate, destiny, other people, or random circumstances controls life events. *Externals* believe that their efforts won't make any difference in the course of events, so, naturally, they seldom put forth much effort to change things. Some people go through life as though they just have to roll over and take it anytime something bad happens.

Research has shown that perceived control affects how we react to situations, even over and above the actual control available to us in a given situation (Ajzen, 2001). This gives credence to the familiar adage, "Whether you believe that you can or you can't, you are probably right." This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that people who feel in control take actions that actually make them more in control of their lives. And, as you might expect, there is a strong positive relationship between perceived control and personal adjustment. People with an internal locus of control use more effective strategies for coping with stress, as well as taking steps that will maximize their overall health and well-being. They also tend to have more positive self-esteem.

Therefore, strategies for developing an internal locus of control will also improve self-esteem. Some of these strategies include the following:

- **Changing self-talk:** Once again, the first step toward changing your locus of control is to change your self-talk. Externals need to rephrase "can't," "couldn't," and "shouldn't" thinking and begin to think about the possibilities for trying new behaviors.
- **Changing aspects of your environment:** Ask yourself what type of people you spend time with and how they affect your belief in yourself. Being with others who support self-reliance could be useful. Also, ask yourself what in your school or work situation could change to increase your feeling of being in control.
- **Trying new activities rather than the old familiar ways of doing things:** Examine old habits about clothes, food, and manner of transportation. How could you experiment with doing new things in general by trying fun activities that provide a different

"What we have done for ourselves dies with us. What we have done for others remains and is immortal."

Ignatius Joseph Firpo

perspective on life? Taking charge in pleasant activities may make you feel better about yourself and help you to see that you are in control of your life.

- **Assuming more responsibility for tasks at home, work, and school:** Start slowly, but volunteer to do things that you usually don't do. Assume a leadership role and take charge of a situation that you know you can handle.

The most important element in all of these suggestions is taking action and trying to exert control over the areas of your life that are under your control. By starting slowly with small steps, you can begin to build up experiences that will support taking more appropriate risks when you are ready.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

I spent time in this chapter exploring self-concept and self-esteem—what they are, how they develop, and some ideas on how to improve them. Now, I'm going to talk about the process by which you can examine self-concept and self-esteem so that you actually *do* become more self-aware.

Self-disclosure is the process of intentionally revealing information about yourself that others would not normally know. It is the act of verbally sharing aspects of who you are, including thoughts, feelings, and reactions to people and events in your life. Some of the requirements for self-disclosure are that it is *deliberate, significant, and*

The Monkey Trap

One way to catch a monkey is to use the rigidity of its own thinking patterns. All you have to do is put some kind of attractive food in a container or box with a hole just big enough for the monkey to squeeze its hand through the opening. After the monkey grabs onto the food and makes a fist, it is unable to withdraw its hand. Refusing to let go of the food and unaware that it is a prisoner by its own design, the monkey is easily trapped while struggling with the container that has been anchored down.

This parable has numerous applications to human behavior. People with rigid beliefs are unable to explore the possibility of new solutions. And, how often have you witnessed people trapped by their own beliefs when all they would have to do to get out of the situation is let go? There are a number of variations to this story, but they all seem to have the same message.

not already known to the other person. It hardly qualifies as self-disclosure if you accidentally let something slip, share a trivial fact such as your preference for vanilla ice cream, or share an obvious fact that has been known to the other person for years.

It is difficult to reveal information about your thoughts and feelings if you aren't aware of them yourself. Through self-disclosure, you can begin to clarify and confirm some of your thoughts and feelings. Sharing yourself can also help to build relationships. Sharing on a more personal level breaks the ice and gives the other person permission and reason to reciprocate. After all, real friends are the people who know your thoughts and feelings. Self-disclosure increases communication and the ability to discuss matters on a deeper level, as well as provides an opportunity to relieve stress by getting something off your chest.

Social Penetration

When learning about self-disclosure, it is important to understand the concept of social penetration. Social psychologists Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor (1973) describe two aspects of disclosure that can occur to differing degrees. The first concerns the **breadth** of disclosure. You may have relationships at work in which you discuss only things directly pertaining to the job. Or you may have friends with whom you share many interests but with whom you do not talk about any one thing to any significant degree. The next dimension of disclosure is the **depth** of the information being shared. With some people you may discuss very personal aspects of your life.

Depending on the breadth and depth of information being shared, a relationship can be defined as casual or intimate. In a casual relationship, the breadth may be great but not the depth. In a more intimate relationship, there is likely to be great depth of sharing in at least one area. The closest relationships usually involve both breadth and depth of sharing to a great degree.

Self-disclosure usually proceeds through the following stages and can be indicative of increased friendship or closeness:

- **Stage 1: Clichés:** These are the ritualized responses to social situations, such as “How are you doing?” or “Let’s get together sometime.” Clichés serve as a valuable shorthand to make things easier and to indicate the potential for future conversation.
- **Stage 2: Facts:** These statements convey information about what you do, where you live, or what your interests are. They may also provide information about what is happening in your life. Disclosing important information in conversation suggests a level of trust in the other person that could signal a desire to move the relationship to a new level.
- **Stage 3: Opinions:** This is a more revealing level of communication. Statements such as “I support

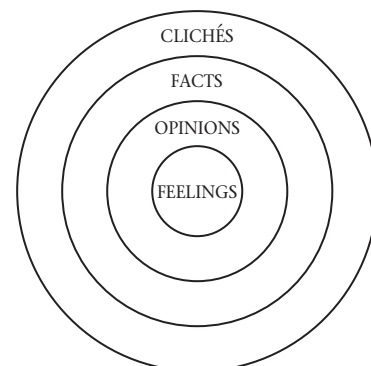
abortion rights” or “I think John is doing a great job” are letting you know where that person stands. Such information lets you know how the relationship might develop. When people offer personal opinions, they are giving valuable information.

- **Stage 4: Feelings:** The most revealing level of self-disclosure is the realm of feelings. There is a difference between opinions and feelings, which is evident in the following statements: “I don’t think John is doing a good job, and I’m angry” is more revealing than “I don’t think John is doing a good job.”

When engaging in self-disclosure in class or in other contexts, you can use this knowledge to help you purposefully decide what, and how much, you would like to disclose. I’m not suggesting that you need to form intimate relationships with all the other students in this class. I am suggesting that having at least one friend with whom you have a close relationship can result in you feeling better about yourself. Also, I’m not suggesting that you should tell perfect strangers your entire life history. You may have had the experience of sitting on a plane next to someone who insisted on telling you all the details of his or her life, whether you wanted to hear about them or not. There are certain times for sharing and certain people with whom you might want to share; it is important to be able to share personal things in the appropriate context.

Learning how and when to volunteer personal information is a skill that takes some practice. Considering the importance it has for your ability to be a better communicator, it is well worth it. Here are some guidelines that will help make the effort of self-disclosure rewarding for you and others. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the other person important to me?
- Is the risk of disclosure reasonable?
- Are the amount and type of disclosure appropriate?
- Is the disclosure relevant to the situation?
- Will the disclosure be reciprocated?
- Will the disclosure be constructive?
- Is the disclosure clear and understandable?



Thought Question 2.2

How often do you use each of the different stages? Who would you like to share opinions and feelings with more often?

The Johari Window

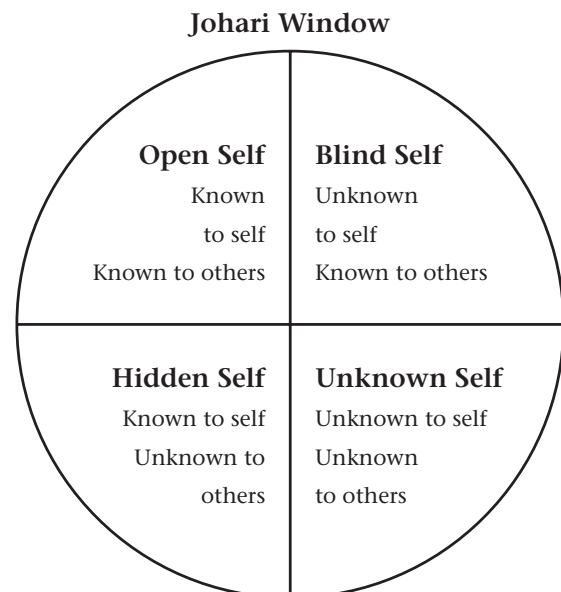
One way to increase awareness and sharing is to use the **Johari Window**. The name was derived from the first names of the two people who developed it, Joseph Luft (1969). Let’s explore the four different categories of self according to the Johari Window model:

- **The Open Self:** This represents all the information that you and other people know about you. For some people, a large part of who they are is represented by this category, whereas for others this represents very little of who they are. Sometimes, not being open is by conscious choice; at other times, it is due to a lack of awareness. The relationship between this aspect of self and the other three that follow is that the more open you are, the more you will be available to connect and communicate with others.
- **The Blind Self:** This is the part of you that others can see but you can’t (sometimes called your “blind spots”). Do you have a friend who exhibits a particular behavior, yet swears that she doesn’t? A clue to the fact that you have blind spots is how often you find yourself being defensive or not understanding feedback. There is an old saying that if one person calls you a jackass, forget it, but if 10 people call you that, get a saddle. People who have the largest part of themselves represented by this category are sometimes referred to as the “bull-in-the-china-shop type.” This doesn’t mean they are clumsy; it means that they seem to be unaware of the impact they have on their surroundings. If a considerable amount of yourself is represented by this category, you may be good at giving feedback, but not very good at receiving it.
- **The Hidden Self:** This represents all of the information about yourself that you know but keep hidden

from others. All of us keep secrets about ourselves from other people. Most of us have done something of which we aren’t proud. But, sometimes, the process of keeping a secret causes more distress than the original problem. Keeping things hidden contributes to loneliness and the often erroneous belief that you are the only person ever to have done this thing. One of the benefits of sharing with others is finding out that maybe we’re not so bad after all. People who hold back a lot of themselves while wanting or waiting for others to share can be thought of as “interviewer” types. They love to ask questions but prefer not to answer them.

- **The Unknown Self:** This is the part of you outside your conscious awareness that you don’t know about, and, consequently, others don’t know about either. We all have aspects of ourselves that nobody knows about, but that doesn’t mean they don’t affect our behavior. In some instances, what has been relegated to the unknown can be a major factor in what motivates or influences what we do in life. That is why it is important to observe your behavior when you do things but don’t understand why you’re doing them. People who have the largest part of themselves represented by this category and want to leave it that way are referred to as “turtles.”

After reading the descriptions of the different areas of the Johari Window, what percentage of who you are would you put in each category (the total should be 100 percent)? You are probably different at different times, depending on the situation and the people present, so think about how you are in general. When you have completed that part of the self-rating, consider how you arrived at this assessment of yourself and think about the impact this has on your behavior. If you were to become more open, what would you need to change?



Source: Adapted from Joseph Luft, *Of Human Interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1969.

You can increase your capacity for openness and thereby improve communication with the following:

- **For the Blind Self:** Be willing to accept feedback. Open your eyes and ears and be more aware of your surroundings and your impact on others.
- **For the Hidden Self:** Be ready to share more about yourself. You may be pleasantly surprised by the closeness that sharing confidences can create.
- **For the Unknown Self:** Explore your motivations and beliefs. Nobody does anything for nothing! There is always a reason, whether you recognize it or not. Use every opportunity to be more introspective.

The Shadow Self

We all have parts of ourselves that we would prefer not to own. (Consider the classic example of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.) Parts of our personality that we would like to avoid acknowledging get relegated to the **shadow self**; that which we try to deny gets pushed down into the dark recesses of our being, and we choose a more pleasant persona for everyday wear. Negative emotions and behaviors—rage, jealousy, shame, resentment, lust, greed, dishonesty, and suicidal and/or murderous tendencies—reside beneath the surface, masked by our more proper selves. For many of us, this remains untamed and unexplored territory.

The shadow self often originates in our experiences as children. For many children, the early years of life include frightening and painful experiences. Some children have parents who don't respond to their needs to be held and caressed. Others have parents who subject them

to physical violence. Even children who have warm and loving parents sometimes have frightening experiences that are beyond anyone's control. Children do not have conceptual knowledge of their own needs, nor do they have the ability to comprehend their parents' or others' behavior. But they do understand pain and fear, which can become overwhelming, especially when there is no one available to help them understand those feelings. To protect themselves, children learn to deny their feelings. The fear and pain that are not permitted to be experienced become locked behind walls of physical and emotional tension. This establishes a pattern of reactions that tends to recur when individuals are threatened by feelings they don't want to experience.

There are several reasons why it's useful to explore the shadow self. First, it's a means of more fully understanding the power and influence of the unknown self in the Johari Window.

Second, the shadow self affects behavior (e.g., Collins, 2007; Gray, 2003; Poulos, 2006). The real problem is not that the shadow self exists, but that it is ignored. That which you try to exclude from awareness does not cease to exist. In fact, it is more likely to affect your behavior. People often do things without thinking, and later regret those things and wonder what motivated their behavior in the first place.

In *Meeting the Shadow* (1990), Zweig and Abrams suggest a number of ways the shadow self affects behavior. The shadow self can cause the following:

- Exaggerated feelings about others.
- Negative feedback from others.
- Interactions in which we continually have the same troubling effect on others.
- Impulsive and inadvertent acts.
- Exaggerated anger over other people's faults.

Third, when blocking negative feelings, it is not only the negative feelings that are blocked; the ability to experience pleasure or to be excited and spontaneous can also be diminished. It must be recognized, of course, that emotional repression is a matter of degree; in some individuals it is far more profound and pervasive than in others. What remains true for most people, though, is that diminish one's capacity to experience pain is to diminish one's capacity to experience pleasure as well.

Fourth, the aim of meeting the shadow is to develop an ongoing relationship with it, to expand your sense of self by balancing your conscious attitudes with your unconscious depths. An open relationship with the shadow offers us a great gift: a path back to our buried potential.

Through *shadow work*—the continuing effort to develop a relationship with the disowned parts of ourselves—we can do the following:

- Achieve a more genuine self-acceptance, based on a complete knowledge of who we are.
- Defuse the negative emotions that erupt unexpectedly in our daily lives.

Thought Question 2.3

When you filled in the Johari Window circle, what process went into your decision? What would your Johari Window look like if you were how you would like to be? What would it take for that to happen? Are there any contexts in which you would like to be more open?

“By becoming more aware, perhaps . . . perhaps we can also, in that way, refrain from adding our personal darkness to the shadow.”

Zweig and Abrams

- Feel freer of the guilt and shame associated with our negative feelings and actions.
- Recognize the things we project onto others that color our opinion of them.
- Heal our relationships through more honest self-examination and direct communication.
- Use creative imagination via dreams, drawing, writing, and rituals to own the disowned self.

Masks

If being more open yields so many benefits, then why do so many people wear a mask? This façade is a form of protection against what others might think of us. Sometimes we put on masks to avoid unpleasant experiences. This can be paradoxical because acting a certain way to protect yourself from other people’s disapproval may cause you to disapprove of yourself. If you are not being your true self (or true to your real self), you may later regret not being how you wanted to be or not having said what you really wanted to say.

People also put on masks to gain approval. The problem with that is, if others like the mask, what do you do next? People who wear a mask for a long time—pretending to be the way they believe someone else wants them to be—often are unhappy or become confused as to who they really are. If you put on a mask so someone will like you, how will the *real* you feel, knowing that what the other person likes is the mask? Wouldn’t this make you feel a little sad or lonely? At least, when you take the risk of being genuine, you can give yourself approval for having done that. You can respect yourself regardless of whether another person likes you or not.

Being totally honest versus using a mask to adapt to a situation is a continuum. This is not a matter of black and white, but rather many shades of gray. At one end of the continuum are those who always wear masks, even when it would be better not to. At the other end are those who never wear masks, even when it would sometimes be beneficial. Both extremes are problematic. Most of us are in the middle. There are times when masks can help you get along in a social setting or at work (at least when



you’re in the boss’s office). What matters is how much and how often you feel you have to put up a façade and whether you have some choice and control over when you want to be seen a certain way.

There is a distinction between wearing masks and having different roles in life. For example, I have a teacher role, a musician role, a counselor role, a parent role, and a number of other roles that I play at different times. The person I am when I’m playing with my band is different from the person I am when I’m teaching a class. Even if you play many different parts in life, you can still be genuine in each of them.

SELF-AWARENESS AND GETTING ATTENTION

What we have learned about self-concept, self-esteem, and disclosure all comes together in this section on getting attention. We all need attention. What you think about yourself (self-concept and self-esteem) influences the manner in which you get attention and what you expect from others. If you have low self-esteem you might not only tend to create negative attention, but might even imagine it is there when it isn’t. People who have high self-esteem, on the other hand, look for and expect positive responses. So, self-esteem affects your expectations about attention

“When you judge others, you are revealing your own fears.”

C. G. Jung

Don't Be Fooled by Me

Don't be fooled by me.
 Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
 For I wear a thousand masks, masks that I'm afraid to take off,
 and none of them are me.
 Pretending is an art that's second nature with me, but don't
 be fooled,
 for God's sake, don't be fooled.
 I give the impression that I'm secure, that all is sunny and
 unruffled with me,
 within as well as without, that confidence is my name and
 coolness my game;
 that the water's calm and I'm in command, and that
 I need no one.
 Please don't believe me.
 Please.
 My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask.
 Beneath this lies no complacency.
 Beneath dwells the real me in confusion, in fear, and aloneness.
 But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it.
 I panic at the thought of my weakness and fear of being
 exposed.
 That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind, a
 nonchalant, sophisticated façade,
 to help me pretend, to shield me from the glance that knows.
 But such a glance is precisely my salvation. My only salvation.
 And I know it. That is if it's followed by acceptance, if it's
 followed by love. It's the only thing that will assure me of
 what I can't assure myself, that I am worth something.
 But I don't tell you this, I don't dare. I'm afraid to.
 I'm afraid you'll think less of me, that you'll laugh at me, and
 your laugh would kill me.
 I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing, that I'm no good, and
 that you will see this and reject me.
 So I play my game, my desperate game, with a façade of
 assurance without,
 and a trembling child within.
 And so begins the parade of masks. And my life becomes
 a front.
 I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk. I tell you
 everything that is really nothing, and nothing of what's

everything, of what's crying within me; so when I'm going
 through my routine do not be fooled by what I'm saying. Please
 listen carefully and try to hear what I'm
 not saying, what I'd like to be able to say, what for survival I
 need to say, but what I can't say.
 I dislike hiding. Honestly!
 I dislike the superficial game I'm playing, the phony game.
 I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous, and me, but
 you've got to help me.
 You've got to hold out your hand, even when that's the last
 thing I seem to want.
 Only you can wipe away from my eyes the blank stare of
 breathing death.
 Only you can call me into aliveness. Each time you're kind and
 gentle, and encouraging,
 each time you try to understand because you really care, my
 heart begins to grow wings,
 very small wings, very feeble wings, but wings. With your
 sensitivity and sympathy,
 and your power of understanding, you can breathe life into me.
 I want you to know that.
 I want you to know how important you are to me, how you
 can be the creator
 of the person that is me if you choose to.
 Please choose to. You alone can break down the wall behind
 which I tremble,
 you alone can remove my mask. You alone can release me from
 my shadow-world
 of panic and uncertainty, from my lonely person.
 Do not pass me by. Please—do not pass me by.
 It will not be easy for you. A long conviction of worthlessness
 builds strong walls.
 The nearer you approach me, the blinder I strike back.
 I fight against the very thing I cry out for.
 But I am told that love is stronger than walls, and in this lies
 my hope.
 Please try to tear down those walls with firm hands,
 but with gentle hands, for a child is very sensitive.
 Who am I, you may wonder. I am someone you know very well.
 For I am every man you meet, and I am every woman you meet.

from others, which, in turn, influences your ability to connect with others and learn from this course (as reflected in the concepts of disclosure, masks, and the shadow self).

But, the relationship between self-esteem and attention also goes the other direction: Your self-esteem is influenced by how you get attention—they developed together. Therefore, I explore getting attention as one other aspect of being self-aware. Understanding how you get attention will help you understand how and why you feel the way you do about yourself, and it will contribute to your ability to improve your self-esteem.

Getting Attention

If there were one phrase to describe what motivates most of human behavior, it would probably be “getting attention.”

There are only a few basic drives in life, and in my experience as a counselor, this one seems to explain 90 percent of why we act as we do. Whether it is by getting approval or disapproval, we all want to be noticed and attended to on occasion, even those who deny it.

Newborn babies literally couldn't survive without enough attention; the more attention they get, the more likely they are to survive to adulthood. Ask any parent if you don't believe how creative children can be in getting attention. Most children have few inhibitions about asking for or receiving attention. Have you ever watched a mother trying to talk to another adult when her child wants something? I've seen children reach out and turn their parent's face to ensure getting complete, focused attention. That's how important and powerful the need for attention is.

Some People Wear Masks All Year 'Round—Do You?

Remember how as kids we discussed for weeks “What are you going to be for Halloween?” We debated between pirates and fairy princesses, monsters and mummies. We finally settled on one, carefully assembled a costume, and spent our allowance on a mask. Then we trekked far beyond our own neighborhoods in search of loot. We lugged it home and removed our masks, feasting on the goodies for weeks.

In childhood, we took our masks off. As adults, we frequently leave them on, long after the rotting Halloween pumpkins have been kicked off the porch. We continue wearing our masks to feel safe, a face we show to the world to avoid feeling vulnerable.

Wearing our masks has some rewards: a sense of identity, recognition of others, and a set way of viewing the world without having to think things through. But these masks also are liabilities. They show only part of who we are. They keep us stuck. And worst of all, they prevent us from truly connecting with other people. Here are some popular adult masks:

- **The Joker:** We make a joke out of anything and everything. Our spouse is often drawn to us because we're so fun and carefree, but the gags get old fast when we use humor to mask the need to deal with reality. If we're cracking jokes while our mate is crying and begging us to be serious for once in our lives, we've got a problem.
- **The Sexpot or Super Stud:** Our dress is sexually flamboyant and our talk is too. We define our worth based on how attractive we are; if heads aren't turning, we don't feel alive. Often, we were sexually abused as children and are sexually aggressive in adulthood to avoid feeling like victims (“I'll get you before you get me”). We settle for the shallow attention and sex, but long for love and acceptance.
- **Lookin' Good:** The rent's past due, our teenager's on drugs, and we feel like walking death, but ask how we are and our answer is always “Fine.” We have the mistaken

notion that we're not okay unless we're problem-free. We feel we have to handle it all ourselves, without asking for help. The harder we fight to maintain the impression of perfection, the more tired and lonely we get.

- **Ms. or Mr. Efficiency:** We zip around the office, getting our tasks done ahead of deadline and volunteering for more. At home, we buzz around doing more than our share. As long as we are busy and productive like humming machines, we feel we are worthwhile people. We also don't have time to feel what's bothering us, or to share intimacy with others.
- **Poor Little Me:** The boss hates us, our mates don't treat us right, and even the dog picks our shoes to chew on. We'll list our litany of complaints to anyone who will listen. As long as we can play the perpetual victim, we'll never have to take responsibility for the fix we're in.
- **The Know-It-All:** For us, being right is about being all right. If we don't know the answer or have the last word, we feel stupid and worthless. We're constantly raining fun facts down on folks, and we hand out unsolicited advice like leafleting zealots. We'd do well to remember that we can be right—or we can be liked.
- **Mr. or Ms. Superior:** Our house, vacation, children, job, and even our gas mileage are always better than yours. We're the masters of one-upmanship and don't know how to live without drawing comparisons in which we come out on top. That makes us snobs at best and bigots at our worst. Our need to look superior is a mask for our inferiority.

Do you spot your costume here? After Halloween, let's throw out these outmoded masks. Being a whole, human, vulnerable, and imperfect person is so much easier. And it's in season, all year long.

Source: Article written by Jann Mitchell.

How many parents have had to play the “watch me” game? When my son Riley was three years old, he reminded me constantly of the importance of getting attention by playing that game. “Watch me, Dad,” he would say, as he prepared to demonstrate the amazing feat of jumping off the couch for the hundredth time. “Watch . . . no, you're not looking . . . watch, here I go . . . keep watching!” Then, after he completed the amazing feat, he asked, “Wasn't that great, Dad?” Most of us, we hope, grew up in families where it was acceptable to need, want, and ask for attention. Having wants and needs attended to should be part of every child's birthright.

As we get older, though, various cultural influences seem to teach us that we are not supposed to need or want attention. For most of us, the change occurred when we started school. At home, we could get plenty of individualized attention. When we finished drawing a picture, we ran up to a parent and said, “Look what I did—isn't it great?” But when we tried that at school, where there were 25 other kids, what happened? It was a whole new ball game.

This could be the origin of the *double bind* about getting attention as adults: We still need and want attention but we think we have to disavow this fact. Have you ever witnessed an adult receiving some well-deserved honor, maybe even one she or he had been hoping to get? As soon as the spotlight is on her or him, she or he acts as if it was the last thing in the world she or he wanted, and tries to duck out, all the while smiling and really enjoying the attention. As adults, we don't necessarily need less attention; we just develop more creative methods of getting it, sometimes trying to disguise the fact that we are actually seeking attention.

The confusion about how to get what you want and whether it is all right to want it is very evident in families. I've had days when I've put out a great deal of energy teaching and counseling and then gone home expecting to be greeted warmly by my family.

One day I walked through the door and Riley said, “Go away! I don't want Betty (the baby-sitter) to leave.” He jumped off the couch, started for the back room, and ran right into the counter. Now he wanted me. As he was

screaming in my ear, my daughter Maegann came out of her room needing to talk. She was upset and needed attention because of the way some other kids at school had been treating her. Riley needed attention, Maegann needed attention, and I needed attention. Then I remembered that it was piano lesson day, and off we went. An hour later, we were back at home and I was fixing dinner, with my daughter protesting that I was going to poison the family. Then the phone rang. So there I was on the phone with someone who needed my attention about something important, Riley was hanging on my leg, and Maegann wanted me to sit on the couch with her so she would feel better. And then my wife came home and said, “I’ve sure had a hard day—I’m tired and I need some attention.”

FAMILY INFLUENCES ON GETTING ATTENTION We all learned different things in our families about getting attention. It is interesting that most of us knew which button to push if we wanted to upset our parents. The problem was that some of us never learned which button gets the positive response. Positive and negative attention are not two ends of a continuum. They are actually two sides of a coin, and that coin is on one end of the continuum. On the other end is getting nothing. Nobody wants to be totally ignored.

For some people, negative attention seems better than no attention. I’ll bet you’ve seen a kid who was being ignored do something that resulted in punishment, just to get attention. Well, imagine that person grown up, 20 years later. What do you think that person would be like if he or she never learned any alternative behavior? Have you ever been at a party where someone came into the room and within five minutes, everyone there knew who he was and didn’t like him? That person could be referred to as a **power victim**. The power victim’s motto seems to be, “You may not like me, but you’ll never forget me.” Some people are experts at getting negative reactions from others. (Some adolescents are considered to be masters of this skill.)

It all comes back to what was available as you were growing up. If you never got acceptance, caring, or positive regard, how are you going to go out in the world and get what you never received? We may not like power victims, but we’ll know who they are and we won’t forget them. They usually make sure of that by the kind of attention they demand. Nevertheless, it is sometimes easier to help that kind of person make changes than to help the person who has just given up and really doesn’t want any attention. Usually, nobody wants to get no attention unless something traumatic has happened. In that case, it seems as though withdrawing is the only way to be safe from the attention they did get, which was probably extremely negative.

There are implications in this for relationships in adult life, some of which will be discussed in later chapters, especially in the area of marriage and couples relations. If you didn’t feel loved by your parents as a child, you may not have an easy time forming a lasting intimate relationship. If you didn’t get enough positive attention from your family, how are you going to accept it from a

“The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice what we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.”

R. D. Laing

stranger? How do you accept that someone wants to be with you if the people you counted on when you were a child deserted you? This affects you every day, including your willingness to become more self-aware in this course.

Consider what you learned from your family. Did positive attention exist in your family? Did you live in a family where mom and dad didn’t say a kind word to each other for 30 years, let alone to any of the kids? Did you know that positive attention existed, but felt that only your siblings could get it? (I’ve heard hundreds of stories such as, “My sister was the talented one” and “My brother was the smart one.”) Maybe you learned how to get attention, but you didn’t feel you really deserved it. This is how attention and self-esteem are related.



Have you ever known someone who was uncomfortable getting attention or would question it whenever things were going well? For some people, getting too much positive attention can seem unusual if they have low self-esteem and don't think they deserve it. Our media frequently provide examples of this kind of situation. How many times have you read about some attractive, talented, rich, and famous person who seemed to have it all—and then committed suicide? There are many complex reasons for a person to take his or her life. Often, though, the stories about famous people who do commit suicide involve tales of early childhood deprivation or emotional neglect. Some people who appear to be successful by society's standards may still feel insecure. Obviously, having it all doesn't compensate for not feeling deserving.

Physical Contact

So far we've been talking about verbal ways of getting attention. But there are ways of giving and receiving attention that are related to physical contact—for example, the pat on the back to show encouragement, or being held as a way to be consoled about loss. Or, the negative side of this—how many of you remember doing things to get spanked as a means of getting attention?

Although everyone reacts differently to touch, depending on the person touching and the relationship involved, touch is basic to human existence. Touch is one of the first means of consolation in our lives. Many times, the desperate cries of babies can't be quieted without the reassuring touch of another human being. Studies in the field of psychology (Spitz, 1945) have long supported the importance of touch in the raising of infants. Dating from World War II, research on infants in orphanages has frequently demonstrated that physical contact is essential for survival. Children who were orphaned by the war and were in large institutions in England had a high mortality rate. Even though there were at least adequate food and blankets, there was often only one nurse for 30 or more babies. As a result, the babies received little physical contact and many failed to thrive.

Tiffany Field has done considerable research in the area of the importance of touch for infants (Field, 1995). In her latest book *The Amazing Infant* (2007), she presents accounts of the extensive work that is currently being done with premature infants in hospitals. She coined the term *kangaroo care* for skin-to-skin contact with preemies. Preemies who are massaged regularly gain weight much faster; they are also more active, alert, and responsive, and they tolerate noise better. Preemies who get massaged leave the hospital 6 days sooner, on average. There are also some recent randomized trials of normal infants assigned to kangaroo care right after birth. They cry less and sleep more (Ferber and Makhoul, 2004). As a result, many in the medical profession have taken to using volunteers to hold and caress infants.

Earlier, the policy for premature babies was to not disturb them any more than necessary, and they lived in

a kind of isolation booth. But now the evidence about touch is so plentiful that more hospitals are encouraging touching on a large scale. Field concludes that without hugs and caresses, people of all ages can sicken and grow touch-starved. Perhaps there is more to the bumper sticker "Have you hugged your child today?" than we thought.

Touch is also important to adults. Counselors often emphasize the importance of touch because of the people they see in counseling who tell them how much human contact is missing for them. There are parents who talk about the loss when their children grow up and think they are "too big" to hug anymore. Couples frequently complain about the lack of physical expressions of caring between them. Once, a young man who was dealing with anger at his father told me that the only time his father had ever touched him was when they shook hands on the day he left home. How many times have you witnessed a scene at an airport or train station where relatives are saying good-bye, and they wait until the last moment and then give a hurried embrace? You can almost feel the confusion from 30 feet away. Part of them wants to hug and part is inhibited by years of restraint.

There is a physiological basis for the effects of touch. Touch tends to result in the release of oxytocin, which promotes bonding, trust, and positive feelings about others (Morhenn, Park, Piper, and Zak, 2008). These authors found that study participants who received a massage and then were offered a gesture of trust were more willing to help others. The authors conclude that touch draws on physiologic mechanisms that support cooperative behaviors in humans.

There is a wide range of touching behavior. Richard Heslin (1983) developed a classification system of the types of touch:

- **Functional-professional:** This category refers to touching that is intentionally impersonal and is used to perform a specific activity unrelated to any interpersonal relationship between two people. Those who are touched generally know that the purpose of the touch is simply to perform a job, as with a doctor.
- **Social-polite:** When we touch others to greet, congratulate, or otherwise recognize them in some way, we are engaging in social-polite touching. These behaviors are simply ways of carrying out social functions.
- **Friendship-warmth:** This is physical touch that shows liking and non-intimate affection for another person. Back-patting and putting an arm around someone are examples.
- **Love-intimacy:** Examples of this type of behavior include hugging, kissing, and caressing. These behaviors are used to communicate intimate affection and emotional attraction.
- **Sexual arousal:** Touching behavior that involves sexual arousal may or may not occur within close, intimate relationships.

It is unfortunate that our culture tends to view physical contact that is meant as friendship as being in the love-intimacy or sexual arousal category. As a result, a number of people go through life feeling uncomfortable even with touching experiences in the functional-professional and social-polite categories. Very few of us are in danger of being hugged too much; we might do well to remember that some physical contact (when it is appropriate) is just an expression of warmth.

The importance of becoming more comfortable with touch as a form of nonverbal communication is evident in the work of Jones and Yarbrough (1985). They indicate, in the extensive behavior categories they list, how frequently we use touch as a part of communication. Some of those behavior categories are as follows:

1. Support that serves to reassure (“You’ll be all right”).
2. Appreciation and expressions of gratitude.
3. Inclusion that draws attention to the act of being together.
4. Playful affection or playful aggression that serves to lighten the interaction (“Why are you being so serious?”).
5. Compliance.
6. Attention-getting (“Look at that”).
7. Greeting and departure rituals at the beginning and ending of an encounter.

All of these behaviors occur in interactions every day, and all are forms of contact that are part of the communication process. Touch and physical contact are valuable options in learning to communicate more effectively. (Keep in mind that harassment and abuse are different matters entirely.) To illustrate the power of touch in communication,

“There is no experience better for the heart than reaching down and lifting someone up.”

H. Jackson Browne

Dacher Keltner (2009) reports that people are able to accurately guess (well above chance levels) which emotion a person is trying to communicate just through being touched on the arm by that person for one second. It works for compassion, gratitude, love, anger, fear, and even disgust. (Two that don’t work: Men are unable to accurately guess when a woman is trying to communicate anger; women are unable to accurately guess when a man is trying to communicate compassion.) Consider that the other person may just be waiting for you to initiate contact. When it’s appropriate, think about taking a risk. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Culture and Physical Contact

There are vast differences among cultures when it comes to touch. The Japanese are known to have a strong taboo against touching strangers. Although the inhibition to touch when communicating is not as great in the United States, it is still far more so than in some countries. Latinos tend to touch far more when communicating than do European Americans (Halonen and Santrock, 1997). Keltner (2009) reports on studies that observed touching behavior in cafes. In San Juan (Puerto Rico), people touched 180 times in the course of an hour; in Paris, 110 times; in the United States, 2 times; in England, 0. What have you observed about physical contact between people from other cultures or countries?

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- How we feel about ourselves, our self-esteem, is affected by events early in life before we had the cognitive capabilities to deal with them rationally.
- Self-esteem improves when you accomplish something. It is *not* the case that you must improve your self-esteem *before* you can accomplish something.
- Having good self-esteem is different than being egotistic, narcissistic, or a perfectionist.
- The more you know about why you act as you do, the better able you’ll be to take control of your life.

Chapter Review

SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

Your self-concept is the set of perceptions about yourself, which includes thoughts about how you interact in social situations, your mental and physical abilities, and your ability to cope with feelings. Your self-concept originates from social information, social comparison, and self-observation. Self-esteem is your emotional reaction to your perceptions about yourself—do you like yourself or not? Self-esteem affects every aspect of your life. Self-esteem is different from narcissism and perfectionism. Self-esteem is developed early in life before you are able to rationally evaluate situations. Learning methods to increase self-esteem will improve your relationships with others.

IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM

An important part of raising your self-esteem is monitoring your self-talk. Sometimes the inner critic needs to be challenged directly. It is useful to examine any thought distortions you have that result in coming to erroneous conclusions about your worth or abilities. Cognitive restructuring is a useful method for changing beliefs that have prevented you from having higher self-regard.

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Self-esteem is influenced by the degree of control that you experience in the world. Some people feel that the majority of factors that affect their lives have to do with external variables. Other people

believe that they have a good deal of influence on the events that occur in life and rely more on internal variables.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

There are various levels of sharing about your personal beliefs and opinions. The Johari Window is one method for exploring the different aspects of yourself. You can bring more awareness into the open area of your window by examining the hidden, blind, and unknown parts.

THE SHADOW SELF

It is important to explore all the aspects of who you are, even the parts of yourself that you wish didn't exist. What you don't know about yourself still influences your behavior. Negative traits that are relegated to the shadow may actually cause you more difficulty in the long run. Examining hidden or unconscious areas of your being enables you to make changes and increase your potential in other areas.

MASKS

We all wear masks at times. Being aware of when you do and whether it is a matter of choice is important. People are sometimes

less than genuine out of a need for approval. Being someone you aren't, whether it is to gain approval or avoid disapproval, seldom works in the long run. Your own approval is what is important.

SELF-AWARENESS AND GETTING ATTENTION

From the time we are born, we all need attention. We sometimes get conflicting messages from society about how to meet those needs as we grow up. What we learned in our families about how to get positive attention, and whether we deserved it, has consequences for relationships later in life.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

We are all "social animals," and physical contact is not only an important need but also a method of communicating. A wide range of behaviors is associated with touching, and some people are more comfortable with contact than others. From a handshake to a pat on the back to an arm around someone's shoulder, touch is a valuable choice to have in communicating with others.

Website Resources

Mental Help Net:

<http://www.mentalhealth.net>

American Psychological Association (APA):

<http://www.apa.org>

Anxiety Disorders Association of America, Phone: (240) 485-1001:

<http://www.adaa.org>

Greater Good Science Center:

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in each chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* from the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. What did you learn about your self-concept and self-esteem? How can you raise your self-esteem?

2. What did you learn from the Johari Window about what you need to do to be more open (when that is an appropriate choice)? What clues have you had as to how the unknown or unconscious parts of yourself have been affecting your life?
3. What are some of your irrational beliefs, and how do those lead to thought distortions? What thought distortions might you want to overcome?
4. What parts of you do you keep in the shadow? What would happen if you confronted those parts that you try to keep hidden? What effect does it have on you to try and avoid the parts of you that you would rather not acknowledge?
5. What was your reaction to the information and articles on masks? Where and when do you sometimes try to be someone that you are not? What would happen if you made the effort to be more genuine in those situations?
6. What did you do for positive and negative attention as you were growing up? How do those patterns influence your interactions and relationships with others today? Do you know anyone who has been a power victim at some time in his or her life?
7. What was your reaction to the section on physical contact? How comfortable are you with giving people hugs? How often do people in your family have physical contact?
8. What people and events have you experienced as *uppers* in your life? Which ones have been *downers*? How have those experiences affected you?

3

PERSONALITY AND COMFORT ZONES

I have fraternal twins who are teenagers. (When I tell people I have twins—a boy and a girl—it still amazes me how many people ask, “Are they identical?”) And, they are very different. I was there for the birth and witnessed their entry into the world. How they came out of the womb is directly related to who they are today; I have first-hand experience in observing the power of biology.

Evan was born first, and when they placed him on a blanket in a carrier, he just lay there. He didn’t make any noise, he didn’t open his eyes, and he seemed perfectly content to just be left alone. He acted as if he wasn’t sure he wanted to be out in the world yet. The doctors checked him out and said he was fine, but I wanted to poke him a little just to see if he was still breathing.

Sadie, on the other hand, came out of the womb in the exact manner in which she has continued to engage the world. Her eyes were wide open as well as her mouth, and she was making enough noise for the two of them. All of her appendages were flailing about. It was as though she had hit the decks running and was ready to take on anyone or anything. And, she hasn’t stopped since.

As they grew up, this pattern continued. Sadie broke her collar bone after screaming down a hill on her tricycle with her hands in the air and yelling, “Look at me!” She learned to ride a two-wheel bike by the time she was five. Evan took a more cautious route. He watched others riding bikes for a while before he decided to try it himself. When he was ready, I made sure his training wheels were in place. At seven I asked him if he was ready to take them off, and he replied, “Maybe in a few more months, Dad.”

Sadie was always the more aggressive of the two, and we had to keep an eye on her so that she didn’t get away with mistreating her brother. She frequently took his toys or his food and wanted to be in charge in most situations. To say that she was a bit bossy would be an understatement. She practically used him as her own personal slave or plaything. Occasionally, I would encourage Evan to stand up to his sister. But, he declined saying, “But Dad, if I do that she’ll hurt me.”

One day while driving along in the car, I heard them talking in the back about who was older, a fairly important issue for most twins. Sadie had been telling Evan that since she was older than he was she should be in charge. She was surprised when I told them that Evan was born first and he was actually the oldest. She was unusually quiet for a moment and then piped up with the exclamation, “Well then, I should be in charge because I have a bigger heart.”

The irony of that is Evan really has a bigger heart in terms of caring about others and being sensitive to the people around him. He has always had good emotional intelligence (high EQ) and gotten along well with others. His teachers all like him and comment on how mature he seems to be for his age. While Sadie can be delightful and engaging, she has no problem going after what she wants whoever is in the way.

As they grew up, the twins seemed to define themselves in terms of their reactions to each other. For example, they divided the world into things with fur and things with scales. For pets, Sadie got all four-legged animals while Evan got fish and reptiles. Sadie engaged in more physical activities and Evan pursued the intellectual realm. At 10 years old, Sadie was jumping horses over fences, and Evan preferred to read.

Evan has a great deal of common sense. He is able to think about the long-term consequences of his behavior, and his tendency to be cautious and play it safe has served him well. When we lived in the country, a cougar came down from the hills and killed a

couple of our goats. The next day I had to stop Sadie from riding off on her lawn mower–powered mini-bike with a BB gun slung over her back. She failed to see the reality of the situation and was going to track down the cougar so she could kill it and hang the skin on her wall.

The twins are now in high school, and their personality differences are even more evident. Evan has been doing extremely well academically and is involved with the drama class and writing projects. Sadie was playing basketball until she got in trouble hanging out with the wrong crowd. Evan is getting offers from colleges based on his PSAT scores. I'm hoping Sadie will make it through high school. Evan will do well in life whatever path he decides to travel. But, I still believe Sadie will eventually pull it together and figure out what she wants and how to get there. She is the kid that you could drop down in the middle of New York City and she would survive. I have faith in her.

I can swear that these two are from the same parents. I was there at their birth. They shared the same womb, they grew up in the “same” house, and yet they are incredibly different in their interests, style of dealing with people, and the manner in which they deal with the events of life.

Discussion In this chapter we explore personality—current theories, how personality affects one’s daily existence, and examining one’s own personality. Once you learn about your own personal style, it’s an important part of human relations to learn how to communicate with those who have different personal styles. Since we are most comfortable with those who have similar personalities, learning how to deal effectively with people who have other personalities requires expanding your comfort zone. This, in turn, requires taking risks. Therefore, we will touch on all these topics in this chapter.

Evan and Sadie would do well to be able to adopt the others’ personal style when the need arises, and to learn how to communicate with others who have a different style. This might have kept Sadie from getting in trouble at school. Doing so would require them to expand their comfort zones and take the risk to be different.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 3

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Describe the different schools of thought regarding personality development.
2. What are *defense mechanisms*? Why do you need to understand defense mechanisms?
3. Describe the four personality types from the self-assessment section. Explain the importance of understanding personality types.
4. What are *comfort zones* and why is it important to understand them?
5. Why might a person be afraid of success? Why might a person want to overcome fear of failure?

6. What is *black-and-white thinking*? Why is it important to understand this idea?
7. What are the benefits of playing the *100 percent accountable game* as opposed to playing the *victim role*?
8. What are two suggestions for how to heal from painful life events?
9. What are the *seven habits of highly effective people*? Why is it important to understand them?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

PERSONALITY

We seem to be immersed in a culture that is currently obsessed with personality. For example, reality shows are all the rage. We throw people together in various combinations and situations, sit back and watch the interactions, and talk about the differences between the participants. Who is going to emerge as a leader? Who seems to be a bit unstable? Who gets along with others well and who seems

to annoy everyone from the very beginning? Most importantly, who is going to get thrown off the island this week on *Survivor* and what is it about that person that caused him or her to be eliminated?

Another example: Americans seem to be enthralled with celebrity behavior. People seem to become popular just because they are “personalities.” What is it about her that made Paris Hilton, for example, a household word?

Walter Scott's *Personality Parade* seems to support the notion that some of us think that *being* a personality is what defines celebrity.

What is personality and how would you define it? If someone asked you to describe your best friend, other than a physical description, what would you say? It seems that certain characteristics are part of our vocabulary for describing personality. Is your friend outgoing or reserved? Does he or she get along well with others or seem to have a need to be argumentative? Is your friend extremely emotional and over-reactive to situations, or does he or she seem very stable and calm under pressure?

In this section we will explore where differences in personality come from, and various theories that attempt to describe those differences. Finally, I'll present a simple procedure for exploring your own personality.

What Is Personality?

"Psychologists define personality as the pattern of enduring characteristics that produce consistency and individuality in a given person. Personality encompasses the behaviors that make each of us unique and that differentiate us from others. It is also personality that leads us to act consistently in different situations and over an extended time" (PsychSmart, 2010, p. 258).

Personality is the way you present yourself to the world. Your personality determines the way you think, feel, and behave—the qualities that make up how you are uniquely you. Personality influences your style of communication; it is your unique self-expression, reflecting your attitudes and beliefs. Some theorists in the field of psychology believe there is a solid core of attitudes and behaviors that remain constant throughout life, and that this core gives us our identity. Personality refers to this unique constellation of consistent traits. Although none of us is entirely consistent in the way we behave, it is the pattern of consistency and inconsistency across situations that lies at the core of the construct of personality.

Some degree of personality is innate. In newborns, this is referred to as **temperament**. Even though it isn't called *personality* at that age, it is the precursor to personality. Developmental psychologists talk about three basic temperaments: **easy**, **slow-to-warm**, and **difficult** (Chess and Thomas, 1996). *Easy* children roll with the punches; they are easy to get along with, adapt quickly to new situations, are seldom upset, and even when upset their reactions tend to be mild. *Difficult* children are just the opposite; they have a hard time adjusting to changes, they tend to become upset easily, and their emotions, both positive and negative, tend to be intense. *Slow-to-warm* children tend to be mild in terms of their emotions, but they stand back and watch a situation before taking part; they eventually come around but they need to check things out first. As an indication of temperament, infants are rated on a scale of 1 to 10 regarding different observable behaviors such as reaction to noise, level and amount of movement, and response to touch. The range of responses among infants in each of

these behaviors gives some evidence that there is considerable difference among infants even at birth. Some mothers report that differences in their children were evident even in the womb.

As we grow older, experiences and temperament interact to form personality. Personality influences our interpretations and reactions to life events. These reactions then influence our behavior in subsequent events. Personality becomes a code of behavior telling us how to conduct ourselves. It is a checklist of responses that are in accordance with the values and beliefs we have developed. It can even determine what types of reactions we are likely to fall back on in any given situation.

Personality Theories

Personality is a construct—an attempt to describe pervasive patterns of behavior that help predict and explain why we act as we do. There are a number of different theories of personality. There is no truth in the universe that one is "right" and the rest are "wrong." Rather, they represent different attempts to define a basic feature of human experience so that we have a vocabulary to talk about complex behavior.

Although there are a number of significant theories of personality, there are essentially five basic schools: trait, biological, psychodynamic, social-cognitive, and humanistic. Each perspective explains some aspects of human behavior well while overlooking others. Sometimes, differences in conceptualization often have more to do with the questions being asked about personality than the answers obtained (Funder, 2010).

Trait theories attempt to define dimensions of *character* that vary along a continuum such as aggression versus agreeableness or extraversion versus introversion. These theories try to describe what might be considered the elements of personality, but may not provide explanations for why there are differences. The **biological** perspective reminds us of the importance of recent discoveries in the field of genetics and evolutionary psychology and how biology influences personality. The **psychodynamic** approach calls attention to our unconscious needs and conflicts and discusses the influence of early childhood on how we act. The **social-cognitive** perspective focuses on the importance of learning and the environment, as well as offering practical strategies for changing behavior. **Humanistic** theories emphasize the potential for freedom and growth in each of us and belief in the lifelong process of self-actualization. By examining each perspective, we may develop a more inclusive and well-balanced understanding of personality.

TRAIT THEORIES Trait theories propose that personality consists of broad dispositions, called **traits**, that lead to the way that individuals characteristically respond to the situations around them (Allport, 1961; Cattell, 1966). These characteristics are durable, meaning that people tend to always behave in a particular way in a variety of situations.

Adjectives such as honest, dependable, moody, impulsive, anxious, domineering, and friendly describe dispositions that represent personality traits (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006). Trait theorists do not assume that some people have certain traits and others do not; rather, they propose that all people possess certain traits, but that the degree to which a particular trait applies to a specific person varies and can be quantified (Olson et al., 2006). Although trait theorists agree that traits are the fundamental building blocks of personality, they differ on which traits make up personality, and how many there are.

An early trait theorist, **Hans Eysenk**, believed that there were three main “super traits”: introversion-extraversion, neuroticism (a dimension of emotional stability), and psychoticism (with dimensions of aggression, impulsive versus thoughtful, and self-centered as opposed to caring). These traits were the forerunners of later theories (Gerow, Bordens, and Blanch-Payne, 2009).

Robert McCrea and **Paul Costa** (1999) stimulated a lively debate among psychologists by arguing that the vast majority of personality traits are derived from just five higher-order traits that have come to be known as the “**Big Five**.” Their claim has been supported in many studies by other researchers, and the **five-factor model** has become the dominant conception of personality structure in contemporary psychology (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006).

These five traits are the following:

1. **Extraversion:** People who score high in extraversion are characterized as outgoing, sociable, upbeat, friendly, assertive, and gregarious. People who are low on the extraversion scale, introverted people, tend to be shy, retiring, and quiet.
2. **Agreeableness:** Those who score high in agreeableness tend to be sympathetic, trusting, cooperative, and straightforward. People scoring low on this dimension are cold, quarrelsome, and unkind.
3. **Conscientiousness:** People scoring high on this scale, conscientious people, tend to be diligent, disciplined, well organized, punctual, and dependable. People who score low on this scale, impulsive people, tend to be careless, disorderly, and undependable.
4. **Neuroticism:** People who score high in neuroticism tend to be anxious, hostile, self-conscious, insecure, and vulnerable. People who score low in neuroticism are emotionally stable; they are more calm and centered.
5. **Openness to experience:** Openness is associated with curiosity, flexibility, imaginativeness, and unconventional attitudes. People scoring low on this dimension are sometimes shallow, plain, or simple.

If you want to explore where you fit on these scales, there are several free online sources. These are provided at the end of the chapter.

Part of the usefulness of the trait approach is that it provides words and constructs that make it easier to discuss personality. It also establishes some common ground

Thought Question 3.1

How do McCrea and Costa’s dimensions describe how you operate in the world? How would you rate yourself along each continuum? How might you use this information to develop better human relations?

on which to explore other theories regarding the development and impact of personality on human behavior. But, trait theories tend to rely on surveys and questionnaires. One problem with personality questionnaires is that the questions tend to be transparent, meaning that it’s possible for you to present yourself not as you are but as you’d like to be. This might tend to misrepresent real behavior and lead to either inaccurate dimensions or inaccurate descriptions of how people falling at different places on the scales operate in the world. Trait approaches also have other drawbacks. In the opinion of some critics, traits do not provide explanations for behavior; they merely describe it (Fleeson, 2004).

Traits and Cultural Studies The Big Five dimensions appear to hold across cultures. Cross-cultural research conducted in areas ranging from Europe to the Middle East to Africa supports these main traits (McCrae et al., 2005). If the Big Five dimensions were the result of some sort of biasing stereotypes, then they would not replicate in other cultures.

But, research also yields some warnings about uncritical use of these personality dimensions. Although many cultures recognize that people vary along such dimensions, cultures differ markedly in how much they value other traits. For example, the Chinese value traits such as harmony and positive interactions with others. Western and non-Western cultures tend to value independence and self-reliance. Another example concerns pressures toward competition versus cooperation in Mexican and American cultures. Americans (and European-Americans) are expected to compete, to dominate, to win. Mexican (and Mexican American) culture, on the other hand, prizes trust, cooperation, and helping one’s peers. These differences in preference can have important implications in areas such as competition for grades in

the classroom. Would an atmosphere of cooperation help students from different cultures learn better?

Still another example: The culture in which you are raised affects not only how different traits are valued but also our views about the importance of defining personality in the first place. If you were raised in a collectivist culture, individualists' fascination with personality tests and "finding oneself" might seem bewildering. Such issues remind us that differences in traits do not develop outside a specific cultural context; culture is always relevant (Friedman and Shustack, 1999).

BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE In the fifth century B.C., Hippocrates, the Greek physician considered to be the pioneer of modern medicine, described four temperaments that he believed were linked to various bodily fluids. The **sanguine** temperament was optimistic and energetic, the **melancholic** was moody and withdrawn, the **choleric** was irritable and impulsive, and the **phlegmatic** was calm and slow. However quaint this theory now seems, Hippocrates anticipated modern linkages of biochemistry with behavior and described types of people who are as familiar today as they were in ancient times.

Today the rapid increase in knowledge about brain functioning and genes provides more substantial scientific evidence for the biological and evolutionary basis of personality. The evolutionary perspective assumes that personality traits that led to the reproductive success of our ancestors were more likely to be preserved and passed on to subsequent generations (Buss, 1999). Thus, important components of personality are inherited.

Twin studies are an important way to study nature versus nurture because identical twins have the same genetic makeup. Therefore, if twins were raised separately, differences between them in personality have to be the result of nurture. There is considerable anecdotal evidence of twins reared apart who, meeting as adults, discover amazing similarities. In a study of twins reared apart Bouchard et al., (1990), personality tests indicated that in major respects the twins were quite similar. However, some traits seemed to be more heavily influenced by heredity (such as leadership and traditionalism) than others (such as achievement and closeness).

Another avenue of investigation of the relationship between heredity and behavior involves trying to identify specific genes that are related to specific behaviors. In most cases, it is difficult to prove a single gene is linked to a specific trait. One exception is thrill-seeking behavior. People with a longer dopamine-4 receptor gene are more likely to be thrill seekers. They tend to be extraverted, impulsive, quick-tempered, and constantly in search of novelty and excitement (Golimbet et al., 2007).

As intriguing as genetic studies are, you may not want to jump to the conclusion that heredity is more important than environment. Genes interact with the environment, and it is impossible to completely divorce genetic factors from environmental factors. Consider that there are also

studies of twins and others in adoptive families that have shown that people who grow up together do not strongly resemble one another in personality, whether they are biologically related or not. Perhaps children in the same home may be treated quite differently because of differences in gender and birth order, influencing parents' approaches to child rearing. As a result, it makes more sense to speak of the nature–nurture issue as nature via (through) nurture rather than nature versus nurture (Atwater and Duffy, 1999).

PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE **Sigmund Freud** was the original **psychoanalytic theorist** who proposed that most of what makes up personality is **unconscious**: memories, knowledge, beliefs, feelings, urges, drives, and instincts of which an individual is not aware. Psychoanalytic theorists believe that to truly understand a person's personality, we have to look at the symbolic meaning of behavior and the deep inner workings of the mind.

The Freudian concept of personality states that who we are is mainly influenced by the internal struggle of psychic forces that are mostly concerned with sexual and aggressive impulses. You only have to look as far as the movie section of the daily newspaper, the volume of traffic on Internet pornography sites, or videogames to notice that sex and violence are pervasive in our society. For example, many video games involve *first person shooters*, where the player has the opportunity to gun down numerous people in all kinds of scenarios.

Freud believed that personality was composed of three structures: the **id**, the **ego**, and the **superego**. The id is unconscious and can therefore work entirely from the pleasure principle. The id always seeks immediate pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The childlike id wants to believe that it can have complete obedience from others. It is spoiled, willful, impatient, and self-centered. The id wants what it wants right now, not later. The ego, as the adult, has the job of getting things done. It is more tuned into reality and is responsive to society's demands. The superego is concerned with right and wrong. Like the parent, it must tell the greedy id that there are purposes in life other than immediate gratification.

Personality is formed, according to Freud, by the resolution of the conflict between the id, ego, and superego. For example, consider Internet pornography. The id wants to indulge itself and so encourages visiting porn sites. The superego might want to restrict this behavior because it is "bad and wrong." The ego might want to restrict this behavior because there are more important things to be done. The conflict might be resolved by internal compromise among the three.

Freud believed that there were five stages of development during which the id, ego, and superego struggle for dominance or at least some form of compromise and accommodation. The conflict to be resolved centers around the source of pleasure and satisfaction at each stage. The stages are oral (birth to 1 year), anal (ages 1 to 3), phallic (ages 3 to 5), latency (ages 6 until puberty), and genital

(after puberty). The degree of resolution at each stage has implications for further development, and hence personality is the cumulative result of the degree to which the internal conflict has been dealt with.

Freud was among the first theorists to explore many new and uncharted regions of personality. Some of his ideas have been updated, others revised, and some have been discarded. In particular, Freud's critics have said that his ideas about sexuality, early experience, social factors, and the unconscious mind were misguided. The following list describes some of Freud's misconceptions (Santrock, 2006):

- Sexuality is not the pervasive underlying force behind personality that Freud believed it to be.
- The first five years of life are not as powerful in shaping adult personality as Freud thought; later experiences deserve more attention.
- The ego and conscious thought processes play more dominant roles in our personality than Freud gave them credit for; we are not wed forever to the id and its instinctual, unconscious clutches. The ego has a line of development separate from the id; viewed in this way, achievement, thinking, and reasoning are not always tied to sexual impulses.
- Sociocultural factors are much more important than Freud believed. Freud placed more emphasis on the biological basis of personality by stressing the id's dominance.

It may be easy to ridicule Freud for some of his ideas, but it is important to keep in mind that he began to develop his theories over a century ago. It is not entirely fair to compare his theories to those of more recent times. Freud deserves credit for breaking new ground and developing ideas that have had a tremendous influence and impact on modern thought. Sex and aggression are still important concepts to discuss regarding personality, and few would disagree that events of early childhood have a significant impact on how a person develops. Despite criticism, the Freudian theories endure because both psychologists and people in general continue to see merit in many of their foundational concepts (Huprich and Keaschuf, 2006).

Defense Mechanisms Anxiety and other painful emotions are distressing for people, so Freud theorized that we try to rid ourselves of unpleasant emotions by using **defense mechanisms**. Typically, they are mental maneuvers that work via self-deception in order to lessen negative feelings (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006). How and to what extent these defense mechanisms are utilized by a person are a part of one's personality.

A common example is **rationalization**, which involves creating false but plausible excuses to justify unacceptable behavior. If you cheat or steal and try to reduce your guilt by telling yourself that "everyone does it," then you are rationalizing. Most of us would like to

think of ourselves as rational beings, but closer to the truth is that we are more likely to be "rationalizing" beings. The following is a partial list of the many defense mechanisms (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006):

- **Projection** involves attributing one's own thoughts, feelings, and motives to another. People who are angry and hostile may see the world as a dangerous place where other people want to hurt them. Or, a person who needs to control others might attribute that same motivation to other people, even when it's not there.
- **Displacement** involves diverting emotions (usually anger) from their original source to a substitute target. This is the age-old story of the man who is mad at his boss but takes it out on his wife, who then takes it out on the kids, who in turn mistreat the family dog.
- **Repression** involves keeping distressing thoughts and feelings buried in the unconscious. Repression is a kind of "motivated forgetting." An example could be repressed memories of sexual abuse (although there is considerable debate as to the reliability and accuracy of these types of repressed memories).
- **Reaction formation** involves behaving in a way that is exactly the opposite of one's true feelings. There are news accounts from time to time about zealots who lead movements against immoral behavior, only to be found visiting prostitutes.
- **Regression** involves a reversion to immature patterns of behavior. Do you know people who are over 40 but can be reduced to the level of a two-year-old having a tantrum when they don't get their way?
- **Intellectualization** involves cutting off emotion from hurtful situations or separating incompatible attitudes in logic-tight compartments. People who want to avoid emotions are often experts at developing their own peculiar logic. One way to avoid feelings is to spend all your time trying to think your way out of the box. For example, even in highly emotional situations, some people distance themselves from any emotion and only respond with ideas.
- **Overcompensation** involves covering up feelings of weakness by emphasizing some desirable characteristic (even if that characteristic is not accurate) or making up for frustration in one area by over-gratification in another. For example, the person who drops out of high school yet imagines that he or she will become the CEO of his or her own company. Or, the person who is insecure tries to compensate by making up stories about all the wonderful things she or he has done.

Above all else, defense mechanisms shield the individual from the emotional discomfort elicited by stress. Their main purpose is to ward off unwelcome emotions or to reduce their intensity. People are especially defensive when the anxiety is due to some threat to their self-esteem. They also use defenses to prevent dangerous feelings of anger from exploding into acts of aggression (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006).

SOCIAL-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE The **social-cognitive perspective** holds that “people actively process information from their social experiences. This information influences their goals, expectations, beliefs, and behavior, as well as the specific environments that they choose” (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010, p. 477). In short, personality is formed by observing the actions of others, observing the resulting effects of these actions, and making decisions about how the world works. Thus, personality develops through the observation and imitation of others. The social-cognitive arena is broad and includes behavioral and social learning theories as well as cognitive psychology.

Behavioral psychologists, such as **J. B. Watson** and **B. F. Skinner**, early in the 20th century focused on overt behavior, and how specific behaviors increased or decreased through reward and punishment.

Behaviorists were completely unconcerned with internal mental process—what went on inside the head was irrelevant; all that mattered was what could be externally seen. The mind was referred to as a black box; all that was important were the inputs and outputs. In recent years, there has been a realization that cognitive processes—what a person thought about what was happening—affected the result of the reinforcement or punishment. For example, consider punishing missing homework with an F in the gradebook. This might motivate some students to get all their work in on time. Other students, however, couldn’t care less if they got an F. What matters is not merely the presence or absence of a reinforcer, but the person’s reaction to it—the black box does matter.

As a result, behaviorist ideas about learning are being integrated with cognitive psychology. There is now more emphasis on the interaction between people and their environment and how thought processes affect learning and behavior (Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011).

Albert Bandura (1997) is one of the behaviorists who have assigned an important role to cognitive processes. He points out that humans obviously are conscious, thinking, feeling beings. He argues that, in overlooking cognitive processes, Skinner ignored the most distinctive feature of human behavior. Bandura and like-minded theorists call their brand of behaviorism **social learning theory**. According to social learning theory, role models have a great impact on personality development. Children learn to be assertive, dependable, confident, easygoing, and so forth by observing others behaving in those ways. He called this **observational learning** (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006).

Walter Mischel (1968) suggests that there are five basic categories of cognitive variables that influence our response to a given situation:

1. **Competencies:** These are our skills and abilities—the particular knowledge we have and things we know how to do like play an instrument, think critically, and understand how motivation works.

2. **Encoding strategies:** These are the filters that affect how we perceive and categorize experiences.

3. **Expectancies:** Different learning experiences lead to different expectations for future events.

4. **Personal values:** Our thoughts about priorities shape our decisions and actions.

5. **Self-regulatory systems:** These are the plans, goals, and strategies that influence our actions.

HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE **Humanistic theory** emerged during the 1950s and was somewhat of a response and a reaction to the psychodynamic and behavioral theories. Many critics argued that both schools of thought viewed people as helpless pawns controlled by their environment or their past. Humanistic psychology developed as a group of related theories emphasizing the capacity for self-direction. Humanistic approaches to personality emphasize people’s inherent goodness and their tendency to move toward higher levels of functioning. It is this conscious, self-motivated ability to change and improve along with people’s unique creative impulses that make up the core of personality (Pennington, 2003). Humanistic theorists have an optimistic view of human nature. In contrast to most psychodynamic and behavioral theorists, humanistic theorists believe that (a) human nature includes an innate drive toward personal growth; (b) individuals have the freedom to chart their own course of action regardless of the environment; and (c) people are largely conscious and rational beings who are not dominated by unconscious motivations (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006).

Abraham Maslow was a pioneer in the field of humanistic psychology and emphasized the concept of self-actualization. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is well known and will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter on development. In short, he stressed that physiological needs (food, water, shelter) and safety needs had to be satisfied before attachment needs (love) and self-esteem needs (feelings of competence), which in turn need to be satisfied before being able to move to the level of striving for self-actualization (Baird, 2011).

Carl Rogers (1980), a leading humanistic psychologist, was one of the founders of the human potential movement. He based his work on extensive therapeutic work with his clients and believed that a person’s perceived reality is more important than absolute reality. Hence the emphasis on self-concept and the idea that what a person believes is possible to accomplish is of utmost value. Essentially, human behavior is the goal-directed attempt by individuals to satisfy their needs as they experience them.

Rogers mainly saw personality in terms of one construct: the self. He believed that self-concept develops from interactions with the significant people in a child’s environment while growing up. As children become aware of themselves, they automatically develop a need for positive regard and acceptance. Rogers stressed the subjective nature of the developing self-concept and concluded that many people have problems because their beliefs are not

consistent with their actual experience. Rogers used the term **incongruence** to refer to that disparity. To put it more plainly, many people's self-concept is inaccurate. When someone has developed a poor self-concept, it may be a case of mistaken identity. Rogers, a proponent of *unconditional positive regard* in therapy, believed that unconditional love from parents fosters congruence and that conditional love fosters incongruence.

Exploring Psychological Types

Whatever you believe regarding how your behavior has been influenced by the theories discussed so far, it is valuable to be aware of them. Understanding the interaction of the forces these theories have discussed is important because your personality has an impact on most of your life decisions. Personality is often the basis for communicating effectively, making connections in our relationships, and choosing careers. Having information about personality types can enable you to be more understanding and accepting of the behavior of others, and to *become more flexible in your own behavior*. So, in this section, I'll look at a very popular instrument for self-analyzing personality, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and I'll present a relatively simple procedure for self-analyzing personality that my students have found useful. All of these are based on trait theories—they seek to identify the type of personality you have.

MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR Of the modern-day versions of personality type assessment instruments, the MBTI is probably the most extensively known. A “well-person” instrument, it has been increasingly used in a number of settings, for example, in team building and conflict reduction in business and education. It is based on the theory of C. G. Jung's psychological types.

According to the MBTI, your personality is a composite of where you fall on four different continuums. (Portions of the following descriptions are indebted to *A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, Myers and Myers, 1985.)

- **Extraversion (E) Versus Introversion (I):** People at the **extraversion** end of the scale tend to focus on the outer world of people and the external environment. They need to experience the world to understand it and thus they tend to like action. They communicate energy and enthusiasm and respond quickly without long pauses to think. They seek out groups and prefer face-to-face over written

communication. At work, they are good at greeting people and they like variety and action. They like to learn a new task by talking it through with someone.

People at the **introversion** end of the scale tend to be more interested and comfortable when their work requires a good deal of their activity to take place quietly inside their heads. They like to understand the world before experiencing it, and so they often think before acting. They like quiet for concentration and can work on one project for a long time without interruption. They are interested in the idea behind the job and may prefer to learn by reading rather than talking or experiencing.

- **Sensing (S) Versus intuition (N):** Those at the **sensing** end of the scale tend to accept and work with available facts and therefore are realistic and practical. They like established ways of doing things and reach a conclusion step by step. They like to work steadily with a realistic idea of how long it will take to do the job. Those at the **intuition** end of the scale are good at seeing the big picture, new possibilities, and new ways of doing things. Intuitive types value imagination and inspiration. At work, they tend to focus on how things could be improved. They work in bursts of energy powered by enthusiasm, with slack periods in between.
- **Thinking (T) Versus Feeling (F):** One way to make decisions is through **thinking**. People with a preference for thinking seek an objective standard of truth. They predict the logical consequences of any particular choice or action. They are frequently good at analyzing what is wrong with something. In communication, they prefer to be brief and concise, and they consider emotions and feelings only as cognitive data to weigh in the formula. At work, they tend to be firm and tough-minded and are able to reprimand or fire people when necessary.

The other way to make decisions is through **feelings**. This means making decisions based on values, not necessarily emotions. When making a decision for yourself, you ask how much you care, or how much personal investment you have, for each of the alternatives. Those with a preference for feeling like dealing with people and tend to be sympathetic, appreciative, and tactful. When communicating, they prefer to be sociable and friendly and are convinced by personal information. They like harmony on the job and will work to get it.

- **Judgment (J) Versus Perception (P):** Those at the **judging** end of the scale tend to live in a planned, orderly way, wanting to regulate life and control it. Judging doesn't mean being judgmental, but refers to the fact that you like to make decisions, come to closure, and then carry on. People with a preference for judging usually are structured and organized. They dislike surprises and want advance warning. They communicate results and

“There are ways in which we are like all people, ways in which we are like some people, and ways in which we are entirely unique.”

Unknown

achievements and like to talk about purpose and directions. They work best when they can plan the job and follow the plan.

Those at the **perceptive** end of the scale like to live in a flexible, spontaneous way. People with a preference for perceiving seek to understand life rather than control it. They prefer to stay open to experience, enjoying and trusting their ability to adapt to the moment. In communicating, they present their views as tentative and modifiable and they talk about options and opportunities. At work, they start too many projects and have difficulty finishing them, although they get a lot accomplished at the last minute under pressure of a deadline.

In her book *Gifts Differing* (1989), Isabel Myers-Briggs discusses the benefits of understanding that each personality type has something valuable to offer. The more you can appreciate the fact that each person's style of being is useful in some context, the more you can accept yourself and others and the better you will be able to communicate. Realizing that each person's type has a gift with it can also help your human relations skills. As you become more willing to be flexible in learning to stretch your own style of being, you may increase your ability to relate in meaningful ways with others who have different styles. If you want to explore your personality type, there are several free online sources. These are provided at the end of the chapter.

PERSONALITY STYLE: SELF-ASSESSMENT Taking the full Myers-Briggs test may be valuable at some point in your life. But, since it might not be an option for some people, I present a matrix that is a simple and easy-to-use method for doing a self-assessment of personality.

The horizontal axis represents the continuum of behavior between dominant/assertive and easygoing/reflective. Do you tend to be more outgoing or more reserved? You may act differently at times—depending on the context and the situation—but you probably have a pretty good idea of which style you prefer in general. Put an X on the horizontal line that represents your self-assessment; try to put it on one side or the other of the midpoint. Even if you are fairly well balanced in your approach to others and the world, it is useful for the sake of discussion to put the mark on one side or the other of the vertical axis.

Now do the same for the people-oriented/informal and task-oriented/formal continuum. On the vertical axis line, place an X somewhere along the line that represents your usual style of relating. Do you tend to be more people-oriented or more task oriented? Remember, the informal/formal continuum has little to do with actual dress or clothing. People with a tendency to favor a more formal style are usually interested in structure, organization, and having a plan. Informal-style people are more comfortable with being spontaneous, enjoy the unpredictable nature of relationships, and organize by grouping things in a “pile.”

Case Studies and Student Stories

Nancy and Emily were sisters, and even though they were very different in personality, they were close and hung around together. Nancy was a couple of years younger than Emily, but it was more than age difference that seemed to define them. Growing up in their family they experienced many of the same life events, but they always seemed to have their own way of interpreting those experiences.

When Nancy and Emily were entering adolescence their older sister, who was years older than them, died of a sudden illness. Their mother developed a stomach ulcer from the stress, and their father had what some called a nervous breakdown.

The trauma that was caused by these events was more than Nancy could handle, and she began to withdraw. She blamed her mother for everything as a way of dealing with her sadness. After all, if her mother had paid more attention maybe the older sister wouldn't have died. And if her mother was better able to handle stress, she wouldn't have had an ulcer and her father would not have had a breakdown.

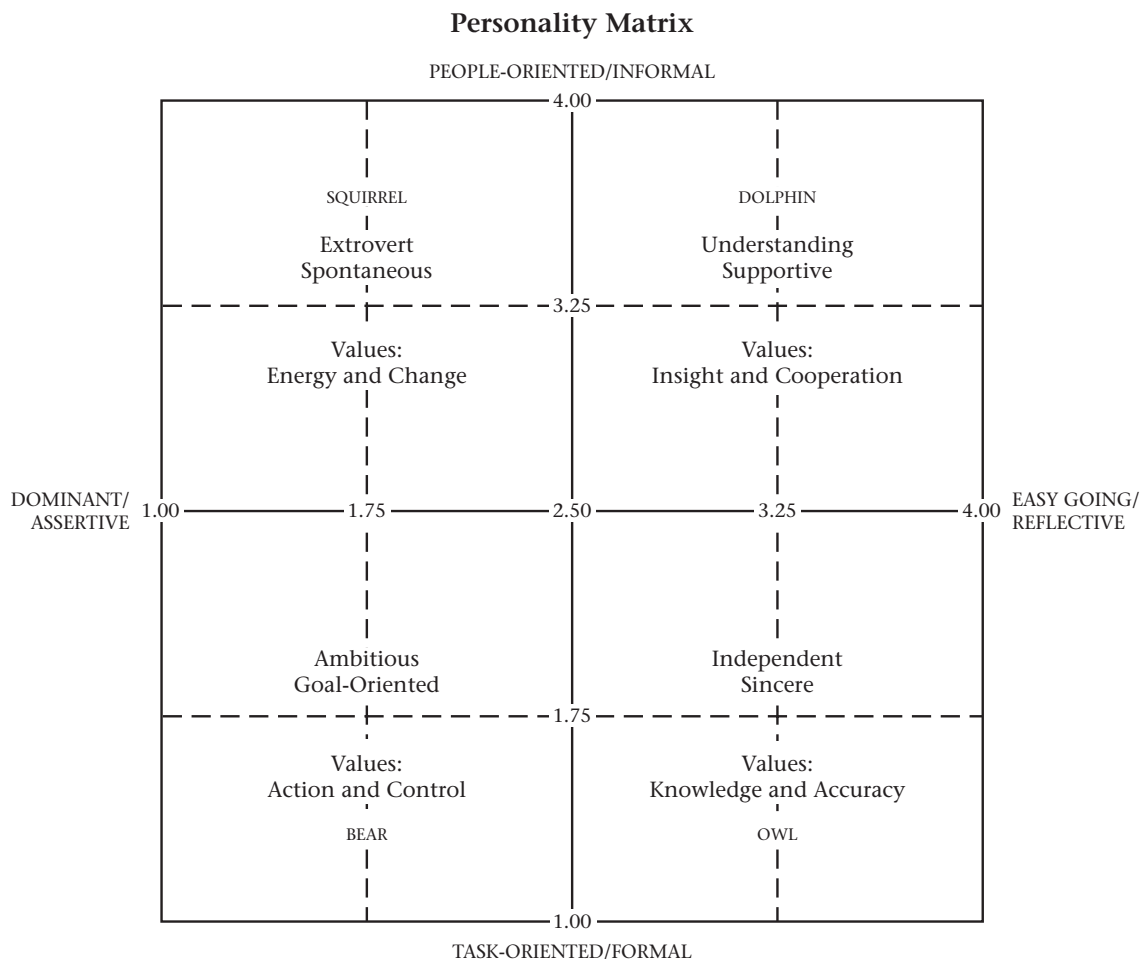
Emily, on the other hand, seemed to be able to realize that there was nothing her mother could have done to prevent their sister's death. She was deeply saddened that her mother had an ulcer, and she knew that her father's breakdown was due to his own inability to deal with the loss and sadness.

Both girls had the same parents and were raised in the same family, but each saw the unfolding life circumstances in a totally different way and each sister's version of the family history influenced her adult life.

Every time Nancy would enter into a relationship, she would find it necessary to demean her mother to her future mate because sharing her pain made her feel closer. In general, blaming others seemed to be comforting. This dysfunctional dynamic continued for nearly 20 years until the day she heard her daughter blaming her for the fact that she didn't make it into a particular college. She stopped short when she realized that history was repeating itself. She was devastated by the blame that was being laid on her, and as she worried she began to think about what she could do to change things in her own approach to life.

Emily, on the other hand, always introduced her prospective mates to her mother by describing fond memories and paying her loving compliments. Emily eventually married and had two children. She was thrilled when one day she heard her son telling a friend about how proud he was of his mom. She sometimes wondered about how she and her sister had come to such different places in life.

Source: Written by D. Juanita Woods.



Having placed an X on each axis, you can now determine which quadrant you are in by the point at which lines drawn vertically and horizontally from each X intersect. Each personality style is a combination of the traits from one end of each of the two continuums. For example, the **promoting/emotive style** is a combination of people-oriented/informal characteristics and dominant/assertive characteristics.

Promoting/Emotive Style (Squirrels) People with a promoting/emotive style tend to get involved with people in active, rapidly moving situations. They generally like exciting activities of an inspirational nature. Not given to detailed analysis, they can make easy generalizations without sufficient pause to gather information. They are usually stimulating people to be with, lively and personable. Socially outgoing and friendly, they tend to be fun-loving and informal people who enjoy being with others. Some people see squirrels as impulsive. Because of their somewhat dramatic nature, they may think aloud in a manner convincing to others, but they may only temporarily convince themselves. Their vigor and excitement can come across as egotism.

In a job setting, Squirrels generally are eager to please others, especially those who respond to their

outgoing ways. They attach themselves to people they admire and want recognition from them. They tend to be imaginative and respond to incentives, wanting to be measured by their personal contribution. They tend to get personally involved with others and sometimes will settle for less than the best to get on to something else, because they frequently like to move rapidly from task to task. Although they may not always like it, they work best in a setting that provides some structure where they can be helped with planning and follow-through, which are not natural to them.

These people may be seen as trying to sell themselves and their point of view to others. They are viewed as socially outgoing and forceful and may even be perceived as manipulative and as using people. They are aware of and concerned about others' feelings, however, not just their ideas, and they try to include others in their plans and activities. They tend to be open with their feelings and try to be helpful in interpersonal situations. They may try to achieve status and prestige by attaching themselves to people who they believe have those qualities.

Squirrels usually lack concern for details and may move forward too rapidly before completing a task. They may jump to conclusions too rapidly. A more organized approach could make their enthusiasm more effective,

STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES

	Promoting/Emotive Squirrels	Controlling/Directive Bears	Supportive/Responsive Dolphins	Analytic/Precise Owls
Measure progress by...	applause—active, dominant feedback from their audience	results; they are goal-oriented	attention; they like to have others stroke them	activity; they keep busy so results will fall into place
Will ask...	“who?” (the personal, dominant question)	“what?” (the results-oriented question)	“why?” (the personal, non-goal question)	“how?” (the technical, analytic question)
Try to save...	effort; they like to take the easy way	time; they are busy and efficient	relationships; friendship means a lot	face; they hate to look bad
Take endorsement from...	social skills; they like to be good at winning people	getting the job done well and on time	friends (“If they still like me, I must be doing it right”)	knowledge; they relate to others via information
Rely on the power of...	feeling; they expect their winning ways to carry them	personality; they hope they are strong enough to wing it	acceptance; they rely on their ability to stroke others	expertise; when in doubt, they bring more data
Must be allowed to...	get ahead quickly with a fast-moving challenge	get into competitive situations and try to win	relax and feel good about the people around them	be let off the hook and not feel cornered or pressured
Need leadership that...	inspires them to bigger and better accomplishments	allows them freedom to do things their own way	details specific plans and activities	structures a framework to follow
Need to be given...	some structure within which to reach goals	a position that requires them to rely on cooperation	structure for the goal and methods for the task	some methods for dealing with other people
Need to learn to...	pause, check themselves, count to ten (discipline)	listen to feelings as well as words (humility)	reach for goals (determination)	make decisions without waiting for more data (initiation)
Respond as adults by...	giving personal endorsement and minimizing task problems	expanding task possibilities, clarifying and reasoning out problems	becoming open personally, combining the task with the relationship	giving task endorsement and minimizing interpersonal problems

because they may appear careless. Their changeable decisions may have a disrupting effect on those around them. They can be highly competitive, to the point that, if they are thwarted in their efforts, they can chew out other people quite dramatically. They need to learn to work with and through others.

Controlling/Directive Style (Bears) People with a controlling/directive style tend to be active, independent, and ambitious, giving an appearance of self-confidence. They tend to take the initiative with other individuals and in groups and enjoy running things, which they do with a “take charge” attitude. They generally are strong-willed and forceful and are willing to confront others about their ideas

and attitudes. They usually make decisions easily and sometimes rapidly, having about them a sense of urgency. Because it may be difficult for them to show much feeling, they appear to others to be businesslike and concerned with efficiency. They may resent other people having power over them; they want to run their own lives.

In a job setting, Bears generally respond to a fast-moving challenge and tend to get bored if they find the pace too slow. They are task oriented and sometimes offend others with their eagerness to get the job done. They want to know what’s going on around them, to be “in-the-know,” and to help direct the course of the work group. Not having the situation under control makes them tense. They tend to set their objectives and then work

toward them without delay. Because they direct their energy toward task results, others tend to accept their authority and leadership.

Others look to Bears for results but probably not for encouragement, inspiration, or support. They can be demanding at times and may work to meet their own objectives without realizing that their behavior might be irritating to others. They are seen as competent and determined, but at times they push too hard and are critical of others for not responding. They are likely to want to get the job done first before taking time to work on interpersonal relationships.

Bears tend to lack patience and may not find it rewarding to work with the same problems over a long period of time. They may need to strengthen their ability to listen to others and recognize the importance of feelings and attitudes as well as logic. Their need for personal success may limit their ability to cooperate with others to accomplish organizational objectives. They will be more effective if they remember that they can come on strong with others and that their behavior can be overwhelming at times.

Supportive/Responsive Style (Dolphins) People with a supportive/responsive style tend to be perceived as casual and likable people who try to minimize interpersonal conflict. Though they are responsive to people, they generally let others take the initiative in social situations. They find it difficult to turn down a request because they want to be helpful, even if they must subordinate their interest to the interests of others. Their understanding and friendly approach to people make them nonthreatening and easy to be with. Usually not highly competitive people, they don't impose themselves on others to try to convince others of their point of view. They tend to be more concerned about the feelings of others and their relationship with them than they are about logic. Because they are unpretentious people, they tend to be permissive with others.

In a job setting, Dolphins are generally cooperative and willing to be of service to others. They tend to work through a structure to prevent interpersonal misunderstandings and, therefore, accept supervision readily. They try to please others by doing what is expected of them. They like reassurance that they are doing well and respond to the personal attention they get from superiors. Because they don't like to hurt others or be disliked, they sometimes withhold unpleasant information. They frequently welcome direction from others to overcome their natural desire to continue to work with what is familiar to them. If they believe that their ideas can benefit others, they will put them forth in a nonthreatening manner.

They will probably be seen as people who seek close, warm, and lasting relationships. They are good listeners who take time with people and help them relax and be at ease. Responsive to praise, they may be too eager to please, pretending to consent to and agree with people even though they disagree and don't intend to comply.

They usually are sensitive to others' feelings and try to keep from hurting them.

Dolphins tend to lack interest in planning and goal setting and may need structuring and specific descriptions of the activity expected of them. They expend effort to be liked, but they will be more effective when they are given open and honest feedback about the job to be done. There are probably times when more open and honest feedback to others would benefit themselves and others. They may need to learn to stand up for their ideas, although their likable style will undoubtedly be a benefit to them.

Analytic/Precise Style (Owls) People with an analytic/precise style tend to take a problem-solving approach to situations, oriented more toward ideas and concepts than toward feelings. They prefer study and analysis to immediate action and appear to be thoughtful, perhaps even hesitant. With their restrained and unassuming ways, they tend to be a steadying influence in a group setting. Deliberate and nonaggressive, they usually wait for others to come to them rather than offering their opinion. They typically want to collect a great many facts and opinions before making a decision. Consulting with others seems to suit their serious and precise manner. Others may perceive them as academic and as taking themselves very seriously.

In a job setting, Owls generally take an orderly, systematic approach. Detailed and thorough people, they usually like things to be rational and well organized. They are likely to pause until they are sure the task is clear, and then work at it with persistence, conscientiousness, and industriousness. Well-established rules and procedures create an environment in which these people's methodical effort will be most effective. They may become tense when surrounded by confusion or ambiguity and perhaps even become immobilized. Because they are not likely to thrive on hard competition, they more naturally move to an advisory role. Their steady and quiet manner will probably cause others to look to them for advice.

Owls are probably seen as hesitant in relationships, not readily taking risks or trusting others. Though they tend not to initiate relationships, others seek them out because they are good listeners, quiet, and nonthreatening. They tend not to seek personal recognition, but instead use their ability as problem solvers to establish and build relationships. They usually wait until they are sure of their ground before they offer opinions. Though they appear calm and reasonable, they can be tough and arbitrary when tensions are high. But they probably prefer to avoid interpersonal confrontations and conflict.

Owls tend to be unable to be casual in interpersonal situations and therefore may be perceived as aloof or stuffy. They can get too involved with analysis, seeking more data when it may be time for action. They sometimes need to look more at the forest and less at the trees by establishing overall priorities and not getting distracted by details. They could probably be more effective if they learned to be less critical and loosen up.

Examples of Styles As an analogy, think of the different personality styles as representing whole departments in a corporation or company. Imagine Supportive/Responsives (Dolphins) as the staff or personnel office, Promoting/Emotives (Squirrels) as the advertising or public relations department, Controlling/Directives (Bears) as management and supervisors, and Analytic/Precisives (Owls) as the accountants, data processing unit, or quality control department. Which personality style do you think would run the company? The usual response is the Controlling/Directives, but that isn't necessarily so. Although Controlling/Directives might be good at getting results in some areas, the people who are more likely to be effective in the long run are those who have the greatest flexibility in their style and who can communicate effectively in a number of areas with different types of people.

The real leaders of a business are probably the people who can walk among the different departments and speak the language of each. If the Controlling/Directives speak only their own language (results) when talking to the Supportive/Responsives (relationships and cooperation), there might be a breakdown in communication. Likewise, if the Promoting/Emotives (action) go to the Analytic/Precisives (deliberation) and start yelling, "hurry up and decide," they may not get much response. It is useful in human relations to *learn to speak the language of groups other than your own*.

This type of reasoning is perhaps even more important on the home front when considering family interactions and domestic relationships. For example, all too often, the stereotypical Controlling/Directive father has kids who represent various styles, none of whom are

Different Drums and Different Drummers

*If I do not want what you want,
please do not tell me that my want is wrong.
Or if I believe other than you, at least pause before you
correct my view.
Or if my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same
circumstances,
try not to ask me to feel more strongly or weakly.
Or yet if I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for
action, let me be.
I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me.
That will come only when you are willing to give up
changing me into a copy of you.
I may be your spouse, your parent, your offspring,
your friend, or your colleague.
If you will allow me any of my own wants, or emotions,
or beliefs, or actions, then you open yourself,
so that someday these ways of mine might not seem
so wrong,
and might finally appear to you as right—for me.
Not that you embrace my ways as right for you,
but that you are no longer irritated or disappointed with me
for my seeming waywardness.
And in understanding me you might come to prize
my differences from you, and, far from seeking to change me,
preserve and even nurture those differences.*

Source: David Keirse and Marilyn Bates, *Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types*. P.O. Box 2748, Del Mar, CA, 92014: PN Book Co. Reprinted by permission.

Thought Question 3.2

Now that you know about the different personality styles, what is your preferred style, what is your secondary style, and which style do you avoid the most? Knowing your own style, what would you need to do to be more flexible in connecting with other styles? What approach would you use to communicate with each of the other styles more effectively?

Controlling/Directive. The father who wants to maintain a caring, loving relationship with his children may need to learn how to communicate in a number of different styles. Likewise, the prudent offspring will practice the necessary skills of putting on their Controlling/Directive suit and speaking the appropriate language (logical, businesslike, goal-oriented) when entering Controlling/Directive country. The very nature of families and the potential for conflict with people who share close living quarters suggest the importance of learning about, appreciating, and adjusting to different personality styles.

COMFORT ZONES

Most of us have routine and predictable behaviors in our lives that reflect our personality. This can be useful because it allows us to focus on things that are not so familiar and that require active cognitive energy. Sometimes, though, our range of comfortable behaviors may be holding us back. In my years of teaching and counseling, I have found that most people limit their options in life to some degree, usually out of fear of disapproval from themselves or from others.

Do you know people who always travel the same route wherever they go, always eat at the same restaurant, and generally avoid new people and places? Some people who choose to do that are perfectly happy. But there

are many people who rarely try anything new out of fear rather than choice. They seem to have an approach to life that says, “This is what I know, and I had better stick with it. I don’t want to do something I’m not sure about.”

For example, your comfort zone might exclude such things as taking the risk of speaking out in groups, developing friendships, expressing emotions, or taking the physical risks that may be required for certain adventurous activities. This doesn’t mean that everyone needs to be more outgoing and self-revealing or that everyone should be a thrill seeker. But, being overly cautious might be restricting your enjoyment of life or your ability to be effective.

Another example: Some people love to go river rafting through huge rapids. Others jump out of airplanes as a form of recreation. Obviously, these people’s comfort zones are different from those whose idea of a good time is watching television, where the major risk is “channel surfing” with the remote control. A useful expansion of the comfort zone of adventurous types might be to learn the self-discipline necessary for long-term accomplishments: doing something considered ordinary or mundane, then sticking with it even when they aren’t excited all the time.

Or, since we are most comfortable with those having similar personalities, learning how to deal effectively with individuals having other personalities can be uncomfortable.

As a final example, consider those who are overly aggressive, overbearing, or reckless. Even for those people, the concept of comfort zones is important because it might be a real stretch for them to become more aware of or sensitive to others in order to be more successful in the world.

You don’t have to travel or do something dangerous to look for adventure. In fact, the stakes are higher at home. For some, it takes real courage to go to a party, initiate a conversation, or talk in front of a group. Sometimes the real heroes are the ones for whom it takes tremendous strength and effort to stand up for their own beliefs and deal with the everyday situations of life.

There are many ways in which people unnecessarily limit what is available to them in life. We are going to talk about comfort zones and how they apply to taking risks and increasing potential. We are going to discuss the beneficial effects of developing an attitude that allows you to expand your comfort zone. You will learn how to begin stretching your concept of what is possible by using the appropriate form of *comfort zone aerobics* for different situations.

Fear of Success

Here is a story that is an example of how the comfort zone concept operates. Years ago, during the 1970s, one large

“Come to the edge,” he said. They said, “We are afraid.” “Come to the edge,” he said. They came. He pushed them ... and they flew.”

Guillaume Apollinaire



company hired researchers from a university to discover which personality traits were indicators of good salespeople so that the company could screen for those characteristics when hiring. Researchers started tracking performance and sales records of the best employees, and along the way, they discovered some interesting information that has implications for the importance of understanding comfort zones—and what limits them.

The researchers found that whenever a salesperson exceeded the salary range of most people in the company, that salesperson invariably went back down in sales the next year. The term *fear of success* generally applies to that reaction. Something about doing well and having an exceptional year seemed to affect many people adversely.

There are several explanations, all of which involve being uncomfortable about being outside of one’s comfort zone. For example, around the time of the university study, more women had begun to move out into the business world, taking on tasks for which they were qualified but that were not traditionally considered women’s jobs. Many women would do exceptionally well for a time, and then, perhaps shocked by their success, sabotage their own efforts in some manner. Much of the information on self-defeating behavior came from studying women who were intelligent and capable, yet seemed to be held back by their own beliefs about what was acceptable for women to accomplish—an example of the fear of success. (The real problem of the *glass ceiling*—women being held back from advancement in business by sexist beliefs—is an entirely different story.) So it would appear that when people are outside their comfort zone, even in regard to positive accomplishments, they are susceptible to being limited by their beliefs about what is appropriate for them to accomplish.

Another explanation for fear of success has to do with expectations. Do you know people who do well and then

feel uncomfortable because they feel pressured to maintain or exceed that level of accomplishment in the future? I have observed this phenomenon with students who are capable and get good grades on occasion, yet don't want to have to do it again. They could get As but would rather do B or C work so that others don't expect as much from them.

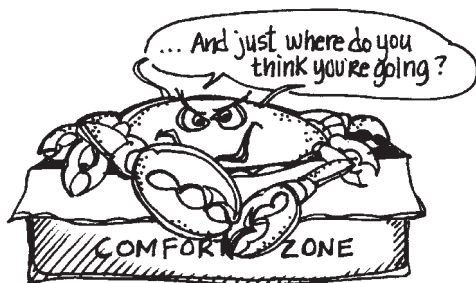
Peer pressure is also a factor in fear of success. There are some people who screw up just so they can be part of a group. You may recall that in high school, there were people who thought that acting stupid was cool. They pretended to be dumb when they really weren't. The problem with sleeping through classes and ignoring assignments to be cool and "in" with friends was that the next year, half of those people were no longer their friends anyway! They may have wasted a year because of what somebody else thought about doing well academically.

Another example of how peer pressure creates fear of success occurs in the workplace. Co-workers at a certain level in a company, who have been associating socially with each other, may have difficulty when one of them gets offered a promotion. They may pressure that person not to leave the group. Have you ever had something good happen to you only to find that your friends were not happy for you? Sometimes, your success makes those who aren't doing well or those who are stuck in their comfort zone feel bad about themselves, and they can't be happy for you.

I call this being "**crablike**." Here is a story that illustrates this type of thinking and behavior. In San Francisco on Fisherman's Wharf, a wide variety of seafood is sold by vendors in an open-air market. The places that sell live crabs often keep them out front in a box with low sides. It's not a very big box, but the crabs just sit there. They could crawl away, but they don't. One of the reasons they don't have to be put into a large box is that the crabs all get into a big pile and grab each other and hold on for security. Out of their element, all they want to do is hang on. If one of the crabs breaks away and starts to get out, the rest grab it and pull it back into the box. The crabs seem to be saying, "We are all in this together, and as we're on a one-way trip to the boiling pot, no one gets out alive."

Have you ever felt as if you were in a little box and decided, "I want to get out of this and go somewhere else"? Were there people who said, "No, stay here; stay with the rest of us—stay safe. We're all in this together"?

If other people get out of their comfort zone, alter their lives, and do something new, then those still in the



The Comfort Zone

*I used to have a Comfort Zone where I knew I couldn't fail.
The same four walls of busy work were really more like jail.
I longed so much to do the things I'd never done before,
but I stayed inside my Comfort Zone and paced the same
old floor.*

*I said it didn't matter that I wasn't doing much.
I said I didn't care for things like diamonds, furs, and such.
I claimed to be so busy with the things inside my zone.
But deep inside I longed for something special of my own.
I couldn't let my life go by, just watching others win.
I held my breath and stepped outside to let the change begin.
I took a step and with new strength I'd never felt before,
I kissed my Comfort Zone "goodbye" and closed and
locked the door.*

*If you are in a Comfort Zone, afraid to venture out,
Remember that all winners were at one time filled with doubt.*

*A step or two and words of praise can make your
dreams come true.*

Greet your future with a smile; success is there for you!

box are forced to look at their own lives and what has been limiting them. That might be upsetting. They have been saying to themselves, "I have to stay here. There's no way out." If someone does get out of the box and says, "Look at what I did," then the others can't use the "it's not possible" excuse anymore. So they say, "No, no—come back in the box with us. It's safe. It's comfortable. It may be terrible, but it's familiar. I know this town stinks, this job is lousy, and so on, but if I go out there, what then? It could be worse."

For this reason, many people who complain about their jobs or any other life situation usually complain while maintaining their comfort zone and staying in the situation. If they were to try to expand their comfort zone by moving beyond their usual behavior and going outside their self-imposed limits, they might have to examine their limiting beliefs. That could be too scary! The paradox is that there is a benefit to going outside of one's comfort zone. Even though it may be uncomfortable at first, the rewards of having taken a risk and succeeded are significant. When people expand their comfort zone, they are more likely to go beyond it in the future, even if they temporarily succumb to the fear of success. Once they have had an experience of succeeding, they are more likely to try new things in the future.

Fear of Failure

Another reason people limit themselves is fear that they might not do well. According to the previous story about the university researchers who studied sales performance, whenever a salesperson dropped below the lower level in the range of incomes, he or she either went back up the next year or left the company. Both alternatives maintained the comfort zone regarding salaries. The salespeople either took the necessary steps to ensure an increase or moved on

to another job or company. Quitting allowed them to use the “sour grapes” perspective, which says, “If I can’t have it or get it, it must not have been worthwhile and I didn’t want it anyway.” Then they could get another job or not, whichever was more likely to reestablish their comfort zone.

It may sound paradoxical to talk about expanding your comfort zone in the area of failure. Ironically, it is important to expand your comfort zone regarding the fear of failure, so you realize that not doing well doesn’t mean the end of the world or that you can’t ever try again. You need to have some experiences that don’t turn out right to realize that you can still pull yourself back together and move on to new opportunities.

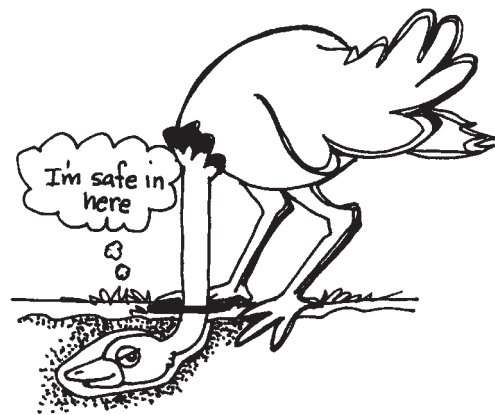
An often-quoted statistic from human potential seminars is that the average millionaire has made and lost a fortune 2.3 times. A curious fact, if it’s true. Why were these people able to lose vast sums of money and still make a comeback? Probably because they weren’t afraid of failure. Taking the kinds of risks necessary to make that kind of money means that you can’t be too worried about failure. The fact that these people made it, lost it all, and then made it again enabled them to say, “I’ve been down, I’ve been broke. So what?”

Considering what actually constitutes failure is another important part of understanding how not to limit yourself. What is a catastrophe to one person might only be a minor setback to someone else. Some people think that anything less than perfect equals failure, which is one sure way to limit what you attempt in life and to contribute to self-defeating behavior. It is important to remember that sometimes failure is helpful. For instance, have you ever had something happen to you that seemed terrible at the time, but after a period of time you could see that it was actually very useful or beneficial?

It is also important to separate failure from not doing well. Sometimes, people would like to learn a new game, skill, or hobby, but they limit themselves right from the beginning because they are afraid they won’t do well immediately. Being a beginner and not doing well at a complicated task is to be expected, and it certainly isn’t failure. If you have the tendency to think that way, try breaking down the behavior into smaller pieces or steps. Define success as making a good effort or as doing the appropriate practice for that task. You don’t learn to play a musical instrument, become a competent athlete, or start a business overnight. Most things take time and a willingness to be a new learner before the skill is incorporated.

According to the human potential movement, “If you want to be more successful, double your failures.” The more you are out there trying new things, the more likely you are to succeed at what you want to do. If you don’t try anything, you probably won’t progress.

It is important to develop an attitude that allows you to expand your comfort zone to deal both with success and with what constitutes failure. Unless you are actively involved in periodically stretching yourself, both mentally and physically, life may begin to close in on you. It is almost like gravity. Unless you are doing your comfort



zone aerobics by actually pushing against those boundaries, there is a temptation to take the course of least resistance. Most of us know people who haven’t done anything new or different in their lives for 20 years. The longer they go without taking any kind of risk to achieve something new, the harder risk gets for them. There is a fine line between being in the groove and being in a rut.

Expanding your comfort zone requires taking risks. When you try something new and stretch your potential, you also learn more about your own style and how and when taking risks is appropriate for you. That can be useful information. Keep in mind that you need to have choice and balance to use that information. Sometimes, you should ignore the “crabs” in your life who want to stop you. At other times, it might be important to listen to the voice from within that cautions you about taking on too much. Once you expand your comfort zone in either direction, you’ll have greater choice in the future. The more you take appropriate risks, the more you will have the choice and balance you will need for other situations later on in your life.

Keep in mind that most people have comfort zones because they assume that they will be safe from unpleasant events. In reality, trying to always play it safe doesn’t work. It probably only limits potential and positive accomplishments. In general, people with a narrow comfort zone don’t necessarily feel less fear. More likely, they feel even more fear because they are afraid to feel afraid. They don’t try anything that requires them to “rise to the challenge.” Jeffers (1987) says *feel the fear and do it anyway*. Remember that one of the benefits of increasing the ability to do new things is that it also increases self-esteem.

Thinking Patterns

Have you ever had a friend confide in you about a problem he or she was having, one for which he or she didn’t see any solutions? And yet, perhaps you could tell that the real problem was the fact that he or she was limiting himself or herself in possible solutions. For example, John has a misunderstanding with his boss at work. He believes that he is being mistreated and, therefore, must either quit or get fired. The real problem in that situation may be that his perception of the situation is distorted and his boss is not really that

upset, or that he sees the world only in terms of black and white, which precludes considering other choices and alternatives besides quitting or being fired.

You can expand your comfort zone by examining your own thought processes (another strategy that will be reiterated throughout this book). Just as solutions come from places you haven't looked, sometimes they emerge from changing your self-talk and becoming aware of your thought processes. Rigidity of thinking is just a form of having a narrow comfort zone in regard to mental activity. When did you last attempt some form of mental aerobics? People who tend to reduce the world to black and white are usually trying to establish a comfort zone of control over complex situations. This seldom works, especially in these ever-changing and increasingly confusing times.

What is needed is the latitude that exploring the vast gray areas of life provides. If you want to change certain behaviors and act in new ways, it is beneficial to begin to think differently. (Beginning to understand that most of life is composed of shades of gray and that little of it is black or white is also a developmental issue. Part of changing from a child to an adolescent is acquiring enhanced cognitive abilities. Even with their increased understanding of the world around them, many adolescents still tend to experience the world in terms of black and white.) Success in life requires flexibility of thought, tolerance for ambiguities and complexities, and the ability to hold two conflicting thoughts in mind at the same time. Some psychologists even consider those abilities a sign of maturity.

The following mental aerobics will help you expand your mental comfort zone and allow for more gray areas in your life. That, in turn, should enable you to be more creative in your personal growth and problem solving as you encounter the many challenges life has to offer.

1. Think of a time when you knew something to be true, and later on you found out it wasn't true at all. Is it possible that some of the things you think now might prove to be untrue in the future?
2. Consider a time when you had beliefs that may have been true for that time but are no longer useful in your life today. Thinking like a 10-year-old is fine when you are 10. It does little good to apply those beliefs when you are 30 or 60.
3. When was the last time you had an opinion that was changed by gaining new information? Consider reading or listening to a point of view that you consider to be the opposite of yours. If you associate only with people who think like you, how will you ever think anything new?
4. Have you ever had the experience of beginning to think a thought that you never thought you would think? This will most certainly happen to you when you reach middle age, so you might as well get prepared, if you haven't already been through it.

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT AND DIVERSITY Another benefit of increased flexibility of thought is your greater acceptance

Thought Question 3.3

Think of a time when you tried something new that you weren't sure you would be able to do and you pulled it off! Wasn't that a great feeling? What was the last successful risk you took? What did you do that made it a success? What will be the next risk you take?

of differences in others. When you have an increased tolerance for the gray areas in your own thinking, it becomes easier to accept differences of opinion with people from other lifestyles or cultures. It becomes easier to view these differences as differences in perspective. There are a vast number of personalities and styles in the world, and learning to look for similarities rather than focusing on differences will greatly enhance your human relations in a number of situations. We fall prey to stereotypes and prejudice when we think that our beliefs and our own personal experiences are the only source for our conclusions about other people. Remember the saying, "Walk a mile in another person's shoes before you judge him or her."

Risks

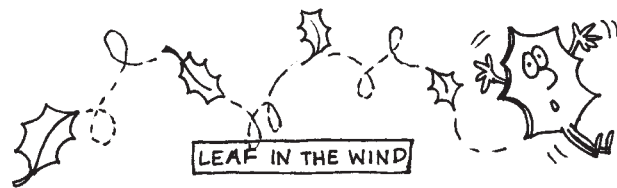
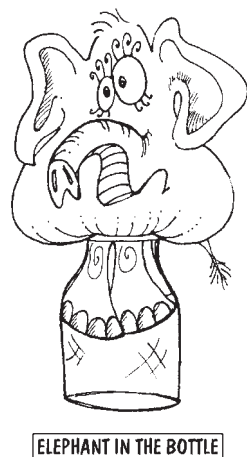
*To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.
To place your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk failure.
But risks must be taken,
because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
People who risk nothing, do nothing, have nothing,
and are nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow,
but they cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves;
They have forfeited their freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.*

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PLAYING THE VICTIM ROLE

Another way that people limit themselves is by playing the **victim role**. There are some people who seem to be forever having unfortunate things happen to them. They go through life with a “poor me” attitude and wonder why bad things keep happening. We all have unavoidable difficulties at times, but some people seem to drive miles out of their way to find troubles that they might have avoided. Even though they ignored at least three detour signs, seldom do they accept any responsibility for the problems they run into. It is usually someone or something else that is to blame for their having run into a ditch. For example, have you ever played the “let’s see how far I can drive on fumes” game? The needle on your fuel gauge has been on empty for days, but when you run out of gas, who gets blamed? Isn’t it always the fault of the car, the gas station, or whoever drove the car last? I call this “pretending not to know.” You pretend not to know when you ignore the obvious outcome of a preventable situation.

One way to improve ourselves and help life go more smoothly is to explore what contributes to our self-defeating behaviors. We can interrupt old patterns by paying attention to ways we may be creating situations. Do you have a little voice in your head that occasionally says, “No, stop. Don’t do that. Go back”? When you hear that voice, do you tell it to shut up? (You may later recognize that voice as the same one that comes back and says, “I told you so.”) Interrupting the cycle of being a victim is sometimes simply a matter of noticing what you are pretending not to know!

Imagine a circle representing all the accidents that happen to you in life. About 90 percent of that circle would be accidents to which you contributed in some degree while playing the victim game; only about 10 percent would involve being a real victim. People continue playing the victim role by denying any accountability for their predicaments. This continues the cycle of self-defeating behavior. It is what I call the **Elephant-in-the-Bottle Syndrome**. Trying to take all of the negative events that you had some part in and cram them into the area that constitutes being a



real victim is like trying to put an elephant in a bottle. You’ll notice that 90 percent doesn’t readily fit into 10 percent.

Why do people play the victim game? There are a number of payoffs. The biggest is getting to be right! It is amazing how far people will go to be right. Some people push things so far they get to be dead right. Have you observed the absurd behavior of some motorists on the highway who risk having a traffic accident because they would rather be right than safe? Other payoffs include sympathy, attention, and denial of any accountability. If you didn’t have anything to do with what happened, how can you do anything about it? This is what I call the **Leaf-in-the-Wind Theory**.

Some people act as if they have to go through life just being blown about by the winds of change. They act as if they aren’t in control of their own lives. (Remember locus of control from Chapter 2?) If you think that way, you prevent yourself from learning anything about how incidents occur. While avoiding accountability, you also limit your ability to change or grow. If you don’t admit having anything to do with repeatedly ending up in problem situations, then how are you ever going to avoid them in the future? That’s part of what contributes to the ongoing pattern of self-defeating behavior. Similarly, playing the victim game prevents you from taking credit for your successes because, you rationalize, there may have just been something that happened to you.

Rather than disavow any knowledge or understanding of the process of playing the victim in life, one way to begin being less of a victim is to become more accountable for your actions. It is important to make the distinction between responsibility and accountability. The fact that something bad happens to you doesn’t mean that you are responsible for that event or that you caused it to occur. But you are still accountable for your behavior in that situation. You may be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but you are still most certainly accountable for the outcome of saying the wrong thing in that situation. You don’t go into a Hells Angels bar and yell nasty things about bikers. You aren’t responsible for getting beaten up—you didn’t make them do it to you—but you certainly are accountable for what you yelled.

Playing the 100 Percent Accountable Game

What if you decided to act as if you were accountable for everything that happened to you? If you accept that there are no accidents, whether that’s really true or not, you can ask yourself a different set of questions when life’s little bummers come along. The victim asks “Why me?” and then gets the usual payoffs (being “right,” getting sympathy, etc.). Playing

the accountable game means you might ask yourself, “What did I do that might have made this situation happen, and what can I learn about myself?” The payoffs are entirely different now. You can learn about possible mistakes, and you can be responsible and gain more self-respect. Regarding self-respect, have you ever had a friend who made a mistake but said, “No, it wasn’t me. I didn’t have anything to do with it. It’s not my fault”? If you know your friend did have something to do with what occurred, how do you feel about him? Compare him to the friend who says, “It was me, and I messed up. I’m sorry. What can I do to make it up to you?” You may be angry with her or him, but don’t you also feel more respect for her or him because she or he took responsibility?

This is what I call the **Captain-of-Your-Ship Theory**. You may end up on the rocks or get beached sometimes because you didn’t read the charts right, but if you had something to do with getting there, the good news is that you can do something about avoiding that situation in the future. You can ask yourself, “How did I contribute to this happening? What was I pretending not to know? What was the payoff and how can I change that to something positive?” Only use this concept if it is useful, though. Don’t turn it into another version of being a victim. Being accountable doesn’t mean beating yourself up every time something unfortunate happens.

What to Do When You Really Are a Victim

Sometimes people really are victims. There are stories in the newspaper every day about people who have been victims of violent crimes. There are national disasters that leave large numbers of people homeless. In these cases the accountability game isn’t appropriate; it would not be useful to ask yourself how you might have contributed to such an event happening. This is especially true in the case of children who come from homes where there was abuse. Children don’t choose to be mistreated, and they usually have nothing to do with their situations.

In situations over which you have no control, in order to heal, it can be useful to think about the following two questions, which are a variation on the accountability game:

1. What is the lesson for me from this event?
2. How can I give this situation meaning?

These questions require people to think about things on a different level and perhaps to discover a deeper meaning for the events in their lives. They also provide the opportunity to clarify values and to consider one’s purpose in life. For example, the woman who started MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) is an example of someone who took a tragedy—her child was killed by a drunk driver—and said, “I’ve got to give this some meaning.” She channeled all the energy from her anger and pain into doing something constructive.

This process is called **reframing**. To use this concept, it is important to think about your beliefs and life philosophy in general. Why do you believe what you believe about birth, death, and life? Why do bad things happen to

“Character is what you are; reputation is what others think you are. Reputation is from other people; character is in you.”

Thomas Jefferson

people? For some, considering why any particular event occurs may be related to religious or spiritual beliefs. But, considering how to give meaning to a traumatic event can be useful regardless of your beliefs.

For those people who have been fortunate enough not to have had any traumatic events in their lives, or who have not had any major problems to deal with so far, this information may not seem relevant now. Just remember, it is almost inevitable that, as you grow older, you will have to deal with loss or disappointment on some level. For that reason, it is important to learn how to deal with difficult times as well as how to appreciate the good in life. Further, information about healing is important not only for yourself, but also in order to develop understanding and empathy for those with whom you may be acquainted who have to deal with traumatic events.

PRINCIPLE-CENTERED LIVES

A **paradigm** is a map or mental representation through which we understand the world. Paradigms are assumptions about how things work that are usually not questioned, whether they are useful or not. For example, some people think that blaming others is the way to get them to change. Stephen R. Covey has written an excellent book entitled *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989). It discusses how to make “paradigm shifts”—how to examine your assumptions

Thought Question 3.4

What could you do to develop greater strength of character? What principles or habits do you most need to apply? What would be different if you did?

Attitude

Watch your thoughts; they become words.
 Watch your words; they become actions.
 Watch your actions; they become habit.
 Watch your habits; they become character.
 Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

about life and make changes or override natural tendencies as needed to be effective in the world. Notice that this is just another way of describing comfort zones and how to expand them. I am indebted to the *Teacher's Guide from the Covey Leadership Center* (1991) for the following information.

During the first 150 years of the nation's history, the focus in the success literature was almost exclusively on character. Character in this context meant such traditional traits as industry, thrift, commitment, courage, service to others, honesty, consideration, and patience.

Then, a marked shift occurred. The focus for the next 50 years changed from character to personality as the means to success. The focus on developing personality sometimes led to superficial changes in social behavior; sometimes people used their understanding of what makes a "winning personality" to simply manipulate others. In order to avoid this, Covey concluded that, when developing personality, there needs to be a firm connection to a character base.

This concept can be visualized as an iceberg. The character of an individual, the great unseen mass below the surface, is the base or foundation on which one then builds one's social skills. However, attempting a quick fix in the personality department is analogous to cutting off the tip of the iceberg and setting it adrift. That makes one susceptible to the ever-changing currents of society's fads.

This research led Covey to the underlying premise on which the *seven habits* are based: that, in the course of human development, some things must come before other things. We can't run before we can walk. A house isn't framed until the foundation is laid. It is difficult, if not impossible, to work successfully with others if one has not achieved a certain level of self-mastery.

The maturity continuum that is necessary for development is characterized by three distinct stages: dependence, independence, and finally, interdependence. The lowest level of maturity, dependence, means you need others to get what you want. The independent state means a person is basically self-reliant. The highest form of maturity, interdependence, means you have the capacity to work cooperatively with others, particularly when stress and pressure are present.

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is divided into three parts. The first three habits develop independence or self-mastery. To succeed in this area, a person must

achieve a private victory over old habits and old patterns. The person can then choose to achieve a public victory, which is developed by the next three habits. A public victory enables a person to overcome a previous habit pattern when confronted with a difficult circumstance, such as lashing out when under stress at others. Keep in mind that public victory does not mean a victory over others. It means a victory in achieving a mutually beneficial solution that represents a **win-win** outcome for both parties. The seventh habit is the habit of self-renewal and continuous improvement, and maintains the other six habits over time.

- **Habit 1—Be Proactive:** When we are proactive, we accept responsibility for who we are, what we have, and what we do. When we are proactive, we focus our energy on what we can influence rather than what we can't. Proactive choices are guided by values. Think about taking action rather than just reacting to the events that occur in life.
- **Habit 2—Begin with the End in Mind:** All things are created twice: first mentally, then behaviorally. Be clear about what you want to accomplish before you start out. You stand a much better chance to get someplace if you know where you're going.
- **Habit 3—Put First Things First:** We gain control of time and events by seeing how they relate to our mission. The first principle of organization is scheduling. Keep things prioritized and don't get distracted by the things that seem urgent but really aren't important in reaching your true goals.
- **Habit 4—Think Win-Win:** The most mature attitude in a relationship is "win-win or no deal." Maturity may be defined as courage balanced with consideration. Helping the other person to accomplish his or her objectives will benefit you in the long run.
- **Habit 5—Seek First to Understand, Then Be Understood:** To understand another person, we must be willing to be influenced. By seeking to understand, we gain influence in a relationship. Empathy is listening with the eyes and the heart. When someone truly feels listened to, he or she is much more inclined to be receptive to new ideas.
- **Habit 6—Synergize:** Synergy means that two heads are better than one. People bring different perspectives to a problem. By comparing ideas it is often possible to come up with a new solution that is better than what could be developed by either person individually.
- **Habit 7—Sharpen the Saw:** Take time out from production to build the capacity for additional production. Learn something new; get better at something; take a course. The more we develop our physical, mental, spiritual, and social-emotional skills, the more we'll be able to tackle new challenges. This is the habit of using and improving the other habits.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Personality is a construct—no single classification scheme represents the “truth”; each has strengths and weaknesses.
- It is important to understand your personality style and those of others so that you are better able to communicate with those of a different style.
- We all have comfort zones in which we operate. Expanding your comfort zone requires taking risks, but doing so will give you greater choices and options in life.
- Fear of failure and fear of success are limiting beliefs that keep us in our comfort zones.
- There are perceived benefits from playing the victim role, but becoming more accountable for the consequences of your behavior will be more beneficial in the long run.

Chapter Review

PERSONALITY

There are a number of different theories about personality. Some stress unconscious internal processes while others emphasize social learning and cognitive processes. Still others seek to understand personality by looking at biological influences. These all have been influenced by and, in turn, provide information about the relative contributions of nature and nurture to personality. The preferences you have, some innate and some developed, greatly influence the filters through which you experience the world.

One of the most popular ways of describing personality is via traits—the preferences and tendencies that contribute to and make up your personality style. Each personality type has strengths and weaknesses. Understanding all the variables can enhance your ability to improve relationships and communication with others. Understanding and being aware of personality types increase flexibility in your own behavior.

COMFORT ZONES

We sometimes limit ourselves in what we think we can accomplish. Playing it safe and restricting ourselves may be due to either a fear of success or a fear of failure. Some people might feel threatened by our attempts to change and grow. The “crabs” may attempt to discourage any expansion of our comfort zone. Taking risks by taking on new challenges is an important part of the comfort zone aerobics that are necessary to confront fears and increase self-esteem. Some people see the world only in terms of black and white. Personal growth and development

requires that you begin to see more of the gray areas. Seldom are the answers to life’s problems on one end of the continuum or the other. Increased tolerance for ambiguity in your own thinking leads to greater flexibility in dealing with others who have different views.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Some people play the victim role more than others. One method for decreasing self-defeating behavior is to be more accountable for the outcome of your behavior. There are various ways for you to change your approach in life from one of “Leaf-in-the-Wind” to being “Captain-of-Your-Ship.” There are real victims, and it is important to understand some of the healing processes necessary for those who have experienced traumatic events. Whether that applies to you or not, understanding these processes will be useful, given the likelihood that someone you know during the course of your lifetime will have to contend with a tragic event. Understanding your own belief system can assist in this process.

PRINCIPLE-CENTERED LIVES

Identifying the habits of highly successful people can help you to identify the important guiding principles in your life. Living a principle-centered life enables you to develop character. It is important to be able to override your personality style and preference at times. Character is the strength and courage you need to develop in order to behave in the manner that is most appropriate to the context. Character also means having a set of principles that you adhere to even when it is difficult.

Website Resources

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

www.humanmetrics.com

www.personalitypathways.com

Big Five

www.psychologypracticals.com

www.outofservice.com/bigfive

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in each chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* from the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. What did you learn about *defense mechanisms*? Where and when have you noticed yourself using one of them? What might you think and do differently in the future?
2. How would you rate yourself along each of the *Big Five* personality continuums? How might you use this information to develop better human relations?

3. What is your preferred personality style (Bear, Squirrel, Dolphin, or Owl), what is your secondary style, and which style do you avoid the most? What approach would you use to communicate with each of the other styles more effectively?
4. What did you learn from your mother and father about personality style and preference? How do you think your personality developed? What did you learn about the relationship between personality and character?
5. What have you noticed about your own *comfort zones*? Where do you restrict yourself? How and in what area of your life will you expand your comfort zone?
6. Who have been the “crabs” in your life? How will you deal with them in the future? What are specific ways that you can challenge your fear of success and your fear of failure?
7. What did you learn about thinking patterns? When have you thought of things in *black or white* terms? Give an example of a time when you began to realize that the world is more shades of gray.
8. What did you learn from the section on being accountable, as opposed to being a victim? How can you take more responsibility for your actions? What would it take to become more of a Captain-of-Your-Ship?
9. What self-defeating behaviors would you like to stop? What would be different if you did? What would it take to accomplish that?
10. What would you need to do to live a more principle-centered life? Which of the seven habits would be important for you to develop? In what situations could you begin to practice developing the *character* that you would like to build in your relations with others?

4

EMOTIONS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Marie showed up unannounced on her elderly mother's doorstep with her four small dogs in tow. She hadn't seen or spoken with her mother for a couple of years. Over the course of her adult life, it was a frequent occurrence for her to go years without contact. There was one stretch that lasted almost five years. After an awkward embrace, she walked in to the house and asked which bedroom she should sleep in.

After a dinner with superficial conversation, Marie shared that she had recently moved to Arizona and had discovered that it was hotter than she had expected in July. She decided to head north to her mother's house to escape the heat. The trouble started when her mother, Laura, asked how long she thought she would be staying. Marie immediately became irritated and stated that she would be staying as long as she wanted; her mother owed it to her. She told her mother that there was nothing she could do about it and that if she tried to throw her out, she would call the police. Her mother, fearing an escalation of her anger, didn't press the issue any further.

Over the course of the next few weeks, Marie made herself scarce during the day. While she spent her days online at the local library, her mother tried to take care of the four dogs. They often peed on the floor and didn't seem to be housebroken. When Marie came home and Laura complained about the dogs, Marie launched into another all too familiar tirade on how it was the least her mother could do was to take care of her dogs since she hadn't been there for her when she was growing up.

Much of Marie's anger was a throw-back to a time some 30 years earlier when her parents got divorced in the middle of her junior year in high school. Her mother had been depressed for a few years afterward, and during that time Marie had begun to develop the story that no one was ever going to take care of her; she was like an orphan. It didn't help that two of her three older brothers had long since moved out of the house, and the third, who was closest in age, had left right after graduation from high school. They had all tried to keep in touch but found it increasingly difficult to deal with their sister's outbursts. It seemed as though every time she recounted the difficulties in her life she replayed the events with all the intensity of the original feelings she had had in the situation.

Over the course of last 30 years, Marie had been through numerous life changes. She had been married a number of times and each separation required another change in living arrangements. The stress of financial difficulties had added to the burden. Whenever things seemed to pile up Marie would either withdraw from her friends or strike out at the ones who tried to help her. In an attempt to get sympathy, she would often tell people that she was an orphan.

It was this belief that created the next argument with her mother. As Marie was getting ready to leave, after having spent several weeks with her mother, she brought up how hard it was trying to get settled in her new place in Arizona. Laura made the mistake of mentioning that she had brothers who might be able to help. This set her off again as she started recounting all the past grievances she had about the times when she had to do everything for herself.

Laura knew that Marie played on her feelings of guilt about how her life had gone, but it still worked. She felt an overwhelming sense of confusion as Marie finally finished packing the car and was getting ready to leave. She felt relieved that the visit had ended, but also felt sad and worried about her daughter's future. Laura didn't know how to help Marie with her anger, and any suggestions only made things worse. She made a last attempt at an offer of support, but Marie's final parting words were, "Thanks for nothing."

Weeks later after Marie had driven off into the night, Laura called her sons to find out if Marie had contacted anyone about how she was doing after the move. No one had heard from her.

Discussion This case study serves as an introduction to the complexity of emotions, and how you can have a number of feelings all at once. It is a reminder that feelings can override rational thought, and that some people replay an event over and over in their mind and then recreate the very emotion that they may be trying to manage or not to have. The story also points out the relationship between stress and emotions. Some people get overly emotional when they are stressed out. Conversely, how you handle your feelings may create further difficulties and add to the already existing level of stress.

Our reactions to emotional situations influence our ability to perceive what is happening around us. Emotions can create **filters** that affect our ability to communicate effectively; we have all been overwhelmed or confused by our own emotions at times. Our thoughts—and self-talk—influence our feelings, and therefore our behavior. And our feelings, along with bodily arousal, influence our cognitive processes. A greater understanding of the connection between thoughts and emotions can help us learn to handle our feelings better and to cope with emotional situations with others in a more productive manner.

Understanding emotions is also important because our health and physical well-being is greatly influenced by the manner in which we deal with our feelings. And, stress and emotions have a reciprocal relationship. Extended periods of intense or negative feelings can create considerable stress, and reciprocally, being stressed out can create negative emotions. Both emotions and stress will be covered in this chapter because increased control in one area will have an impact on the other. The more that you can understand and deal with your emotions, the more you will be able to maintain a manageable level of stress. And, the more you develop effective strategies for dealing with stress, the more you will be able to lessen the degree and amount of negative feelings you experience.

When considering emotions, it is crucial to keep things in perspective and strive for balance. Some people suppress their feelings to the extent that the suppression yields negative results. People who initially **overcontrol** their emotions may finally overreact to situations and behave in an inappropriate manner. Lack of appropriate emotional expression may contribute to poor communication skills and affect the ability to have close relationships. Unexpressed feelings may even exhibit themselves in physiological ailments and illness.

On the other hand, people who **undercontrol** their feelings may experience difficulty in their relationships due to poor impulse control. When emotions are given too much emphasis, they cloud our ability to process cognitive information. Feelings can motivate us to do wonderful things and accomplish great deeds, but strong emotions can also make us act in ways that we later regret.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 4

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. What are the functions of emotions and what are their four components?
2. What are the 10 building blocks of emotions?
3. What is *associating* and what do you use it for? What is *dissociating* and what do you use it for?
4. From the section *Incoming and Outgoing Emotions*, describe the four emotional types. How do these relate to associating and dissociating?
5. From the section *The Cognitive Component of Emotions and Thought Distortion*, what is the effect of your thoughts on emotions? What is *thought distortion*?
6. What are the six basic steps for confronting *thought distortion*?
7. Why are some people more angry than others?
8. When should anger be controlled? Describe six ways to control anger.
9. What are the differences between *constructive* and *destructive* guilt?
10. Describe the five steps in managing guilt.
11. Why do people inhibit themselves when it comes to expressing sadness and what are the results of unexpressed sadness?
12. What is *emotional intelligence*, and what are the five related factors?
13. From the section *Building Emotional Intelligence*, describe the seven methods to boost your emotional intelligence.
14. What are the positive and negative effects of stress and what are the four major sources of stress for most people?
15. What are the means for coping with stress? What does *Stop at the Top* mean?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

What Are Emotions?

Many psychologists believe that emotions have four components—physiological arousal, subjective feelings, cognitive processes, and behavioral reactions—that occur in response to events we see as personally important (Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011):

1. **Physiological arousal:** The biological reactions of the nervous system, various glands and organs within the body, and activity in brain structures. This causes reactions like sweaty palms, increased heart rate, and trembling.
2. **Subjective feelings:** What you are aware of and the name you give to the emotion you're having.
3. **Cognitive processes:** How you get to the name of the emotion you're having. Physiological arousal may be given any number of different labels depending on the context of the situation. The sensation we feel when the airplane hits an air pocket and drops suddenly is fairly similar to the sensation of riding a roller coaster over a big drop. One experience may be called "fear," whereas the other might be labeled "fun and excitement."
4. **Behavioral reactions:** Facial expressions, as well as gestures and tones of voice, serve to communicate our feelings to others. Cries of distress and running for our lives are also adaptive responses that may enhance our chances for survival. People have many ways of expressing similar feelings. Some people are reserved about showing any type of emotion, but that doesn't mean that they don't feel it. Other people are highly demonstrative regardless of the emotion being experienced and give little thought to the time, place, or circumstance in which it occurs.

FUNCTION OF EMOTIONS Psychologists have identified a number of functions for our emotions. Emotions prepare us for action. If you see a bear in the woods, it would be a good idea to do something about removing yourself from the area. Emotions also shape future behavior by reminding us of the consequences of previous actions. If you were rude and obnoxious and it resulted in an unpleasant response from someone important to you, then you might remember that experience in the future and act differently. Emotions also help us interact more effectively with others. An important aspect of communication is being able to understand and express emotions. Especially in intimate relationships, expressing and sharing feelings is an important part of the relationship (Siemer, Mauss, and Gross, 2007).

Emotions: Ten Building Blocks

Before delving into theory and some of the more complex aspects of emotions, it can be useful to discuss some general concepts that will apply to an everyday

understanding of emotions and how they play a part in our lives. The following 10 concepts provide a foundation to build on as we discuss dealing with emotions and having more emotional control when useful.

1. Emotions aren't right or wrong: Feelings are indicators that something is happening inside you; you are having a reaction to an event, real or imagined. Our society tends to classify emotions as good (e.g., happy) and bad (e.g., angry or depressed). Emotions aren't necessarily good or bad, right or wrong; they just are. Suspending judgment about feelings allows a person to concentrate instead on the internal message the feeling is sending and to consider what caused the reaction and what can be learned from the experience.

You should accept an emotion before attempting to change it. For example, refusing to acknowledge anger doesn't help you change that feeling. Telling yourself you aren't angry when you are won't help you learn to control or express that emotion in an appropriate manner. However, accepting your various emotional responses doesn't automatically justify any type of behavior.

2. Context makes a difference: Some people are good at cutting their feelings off immediately. Others have an emotional reaction at almost any time or place. Each of these styles can be useful in certain situations and not useful in others. For example, an emergency room doctor must be able to detach emotionally in order to function effectively, but that same detachment might be detrimental when interacting with family members at home. Similarly, the person who easily experiences a full range of emotional responses may do well in personal relationships but have difficulty functioning in problem-solving or task-oriented situations. The context of the situation dictates which response is most useful.

3. Family beliefs affect emotions: In some families, any and all feelings are given expression. In other families expressing emotions is not tolerated. Consider the *Wild Wilson* home, where all emotions are freely expressed, usually at maximum volume. They have loud parties and regular Friday night fights. People and objects fly out the windows during their recreational arguments. On the other end of the spectrum is the *Silent Smith* home, in which no one has raised a voice in anger in 20 years, and they pride themselves on never having had an argument. Unpleasant feelings cause a cold, dark, brooding atmosphere reminiscent of a late-night horror movie.

Members of these two families obviously have different beliefs about emotional expression. The importance of understanding family background becomes clear when imagining people from these two families marrying each other. When they have relationship problems, the situation will be compounded by their emotional differences. Most likely, they will argue about the problem, about how to express emotions about the problem, and about what constitutes problem solving.

Some of the worst fights that couples have are about how they are fighting!

4. *Repressing feelings may make them more intense:* Children often express the full range of emotions available to them between getting up in the morning and eating breakfast. They don't have hang-ups about emotional situations; they simply express what they are feeling in the moment. An early morning "I hate you and will never speak to you again, ever" argument between two children will be resolved and forgotten by afternoon of the same day.

As we grow up, we learn to censor certain emotions as unacceptable, probably because of family training and societal pressure. Our culture seems to condition adults to repress any emotions that are less than neutral. The acceptable adult response to "How are you doing?" is "Fine," even when that is untrue. Trying to suppress anger or irritation usually increases the intensity of the emotion. In some cases, the difficulties that arise from trying to avoid an emotional situation may be more of a problem than the original situation itself. Most of the time, it is better to deal with the feelings and the situation causing them than to try to cover them up.

5. *Limiting one feeling may limit them all:* Some people think it is possible to limit their feelings of sadness or anger yet experience all the happiness they want. It doesn't work that way! Trying to limit certain emotions to a particular degree actually limits them all to the same degree. Have you noticed that people who don't express sadness or anger also have difficulty expressing joy or happiness? These are the *Spocks* (the Vulcan on the original *Star Trek* series) of the world, who have an extremely narrow range of emotions. After all, they believe that emotions are illogical! Counseling theories suggest that to have more happiness, a person must experience all emotions. That includes emotions considered to be other than positive or neutral.

6. *We have feelings about feelings:* Emotions are complex because they are seldom experienced in a pure form. While there is a range of primary feelings (mad, sad, glad, fear, surprise, and disgust), you may feel a combination of emotions simultaneously. In addition, each of those primary emotions can be experienced on a continuum from mild to intense.

Often, we have a reaction to an emotion itself, which may then cause additional feelings. Some people get scared, guilty, sad, or hopeless after they have felt and expressed anger. Other people actually feel scared when they are very happy because they fear that something negative will soon happen.

Our society finds it more acceptable for men to feel anger than to feel sadness. For women, the reverse is true: they get more acceptance for being sad than for being mad. Is it any wonder that men and women have different reactions to those feelings? For example, consider the stereotypical cowboy. He walks into the White Horse Tavern

and he's feeling sad, maybe because he's lost his wife, job, dog, or all three. He feels close to tears and that scares him because he's not supposed to cry. So he gets angry because he feels scared about feeling sad, and instead of feeling any of that he tries to scare someone else by provoking another person. If he gets angry and gets into a fight and is thrown into jail, he may feel better temporarily because he no longer feels so scared at feeling sad.

7. *The way out is the way in:* Sometimes, the only way to get over a negative event is to go through the emotional experience associated with it. There are some situations in life that only get worse if ignored, such as pretending a toothache doesn't exist. It may eventually get better by itself, but only after a long time of being in pain and only then because, eventually, the tooth falls out. The original problem may have gone away, but there is a new one: How are you going to eat corn on the cob? Some people ignore their problems for years, hoping they will just disappear, but some changes in life only come about when people are willing to endure the short-term discomfort involved in doing the needed work. Only then are they free to get on with their lives without being stuck in the unresolved emotions of some past event.

8. *Know how to get in and get out:* Some people have no problem getting into their feelings. They dive right in, but then have trouble getting out. If they have a bad experience, they rehearse it in their minds a hundred times and continue talking about it even though it should have been forgotten months ago. Or, they experience every emotion of those around them, even when it would be better to stay detached.

Other people are the opposite. Their feelings happen so fast that they don't even realize that anything has happened. They may have cut the feeling off before they were even conscious of having it. For them, getting out of emotions is easy, but they don't know how to really experience an emotion when it is appropriate. It is important to have both choices and to know how and when to use each one.

9. *Use a dimmer switch on emotions:* People have methods of emotional control analogous to the electrical switches in a house. Some people are "hard-wired," with no switch at all; they are either permanently on or permanently off. These people respond to everything with one emotion or don't respond at all. Others have an on/off switch, but it doesn't allow for any intermediate responses; it's either dead calm or a volcano exploding. The best option is using a dimmer switch that allows the use of anywhere between 10 watts to 110 watts of emotional power, depending on the mood or situation.

10. *Remember to remember:* We all have times when we handle emotional situations well and times when we handle them poorly. Think about situations in which you have handled your emotions in a useful and suitable way. What elements of the situation enabled you to be that

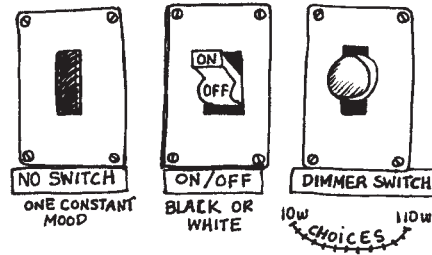
way? Now think of a time when you were less resourceful. What specific actions on your part made the situation turn out the way it did? The key seems to be remembering what needs to be done in a particular context before the occasion arises. What signal alerts you to the fact that you have reached a point where your choice of actions will determine the outcome? How can you ensure that you will remember the signal in the future? It doesn't do much good to recognize a better way of handling a situation half an hour after you've blown it with an inappropriate emotional response.

Types of Emotions

There are hundreds of words in the English language for emotions, but most psychologists classify emotions into clusters. Many psychologists talk about four basic emotions—**mad, sad, glad, and fear**—and suggest that all emotions are combinations of these four. Psychologists who study facial expressions add another two—**disgust and surprise** (Ekman, 1994)—because they are also universally recognized facial expressions. The emotions most relevant for a human relations course—anger, sadness, and fear—plus guilt, are explored more fully in this chapter. We'll discuss happiness in Chapter 11.

As introduced above, psychologists usually distinguish between primary and secondary emotions. **Primary**, or basic, **emotions** refer to the initial and direct emotional response to an experience. In contrast, **secondary**, or complex, **emotions** are reflective, involve evaluation of the self, and typically follow primary emotions—they are your emotional response to your emotional response. Remember the story about the cowboy? His primary emotion was sadness. But, because of his view of himself, sadness was unacceptable, so his reaction to sadness was anger.

Classification schemes for emotions can get much more complicated than four (or even six) that are either primary or secondary. More complicated schemes are useful for those psychologists who are researching emotions (or those therapists counseling clients) and need to make finer distinctions. Even though we won't expand on the more complicated schemes in this chapter, I'll present one popular one so that you can appreciate that trying to define emotions, like defining any other construct,



is merely an attempt to provide a vocabulary for talking about complex human behavior. Like any other construct, there is no truth in the universe that any single definitional scheme for emotions is the right one; each is useful only to the extent that it can explain or predict behavior.

Robert **Plutchik** (1980), for example, has identified eight primary emotions: acceptance, surprise, anticipation, disgust, anger, sadness, fear, and joy. He places these emotions inside the perimeter of a wheel (see the diagram in page 74, Baird, 2011). He suggests that these primary feelings can be combined to form mixed emotions, which are listed on the outside of the wheel. Plutchik believes that emotions are like colors on an artist's palette. The various hues of emotional feelings can be produced by mixing the primary colors. These resulting emotions or feelings include: love, submission, awe, disappointment, remorse, contempt, aggressiveness, and optimism. His model also proposes that emotions have four dimensions: (a) they are positive or negative; (b) they are primary or mixed; (c) they vary in intensity; and (d) many are polar opposites—you can't feel them simultaneously.

Thought Question 4.1

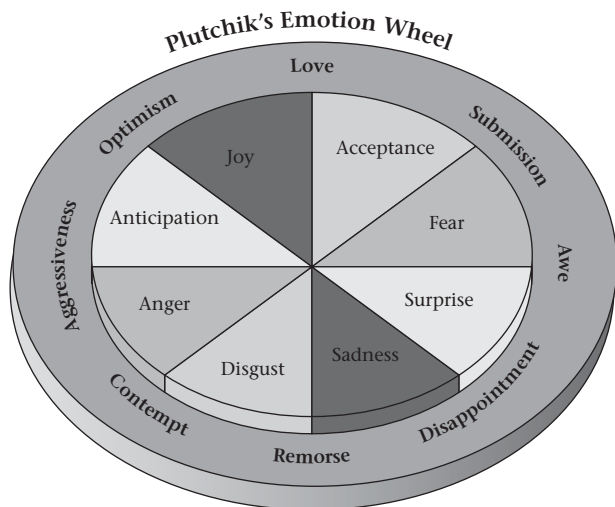
Think of a time when you handled your emotions well and a time when you didn't. What was the difference between the two situations and your behavior in each? What was the "difference that made the difference," and how will you remember that in the future?



WILD WILSON

SILENT SMITH

Family influence on emotions



So you can see that trying to define “emotion” can get complicated fast.

Theories of Emotions

Understanding the purposes of emotions and all the complexities of how the components of emotions interrelate is the work of an entire professional career and is definitely outside the scope of a textbook on human relations. I want to present just enough information to enable you to appreciate the complexity of what is happening inside your head so that you are better able to keep your emotions in perspective and deal with them effectively. So, in this section, I will present a few current theories about emotions, with an emphasis on the neuroscience of emotions.

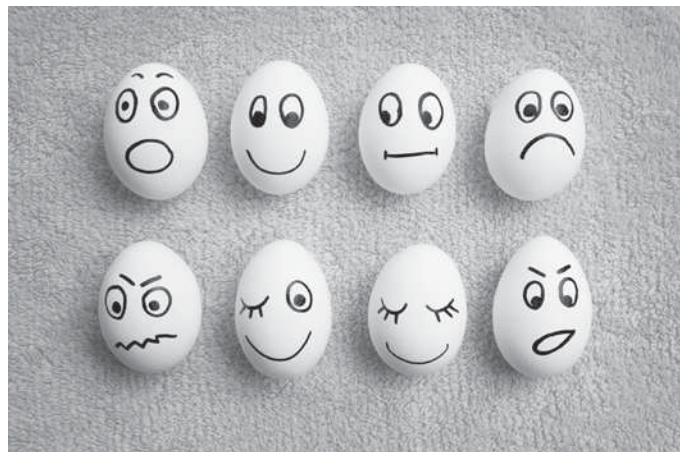
A number of theories have attempted to explain the relationships between emotions, physical response, and behavior. The *common sense* approach says that if we see a bear, we have an emotional feeling—fear, most likely. This leads to arousal and an increase in heart rate, and leads to a behavior—running, for

instance. However, the **James-Lange theory** of emotions states that bodily arousal does not follow a feeling such as fear. Instead, James and Lange argued, emotional feelings follow bodily arousal. Thus, we see a bear, are aroused, run, and then feel fear as we become aware of our bodily reactions. But neither the common sense approach nor the James-Lange theory adequately explain the complexities of human emotional responses.

There has been an increasing importance placed on the role of thinking and cognition as they relate to emotions. For example, The **Schachter-Singer** two-factor theory (Schachter and Singer, 1962) posits that emotion occurs when a particular *label* is applied to general physical *arousal*. Their cognition-plus-feedback theory says that *how* we perceive an environment feeds back in to the physiological arousal and influences what we feel. When we are aroused, most of us have a need to interpret and label our feelings. The label—fear, anger, or happiness—applied to bodily arousal is influenced by past experience, the situation, and the reactions of others. If we see a bear, our reaction is determined by the label we give to the arousal. A bear in the zoo creates a different reaction than does a bear in the woods. A further extension of the cognitive influence on emotions is the concept of internal dialogue. We feel differently because we say different things to ourselves about the two bears.

Similarly, Richard Lazarus (1993) developed the **cognitive appraisal theory**. He believes that we have to think about our physiological responses in order to develop or experience an emotion. According to the cognitive appraisal theory, if you notice a particular physiological response, you first have to decide what it means before you can feel an emotion.

The real point of all this is that having to decide what emotion a physiological response indicates could help us to have greater emotional control, but it could also lead to misattribution. Part of why emotions can be confusing is that we may feel a physiological response and not know consciously why we are having that sensation. We then try to explain the response by attributing it to the situation when we may have created or imagined something that really isn't what is happening.



NEUROSCIENCE OF EMOTIONS Emotions are associated with distinct patterns of responses by the nervous system and in the brain. When you are experiencing a pounding heart, rapid breathing, and a churning stomach, it is due to the activation of the nervous system. When you are threatened by the bear in the woods, the nervous system triggers the fight or flight response. You perspire, your mouth goes dry, and your pupils dilate. Blood sugar levels increase and digestion stops in preparation for needing to take immediate action to save yourself from the bear. According to evolutionary psychologists, one reason for having emotions—in this case fear—is

to ensure the survival of the species (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010).

The nervous system is also activated by other intense emotions such as excitement, passion, or extreme joy. Not all emotions involve intense physical reactions, though. Some feelings such as contentment or relaxation are characterized by decreased physical arousal and the slowing of some bodily functions (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010).

FEAR Of all the emotions, the brain processes involved in fear have been the most thoroughly studied. Many brain areas are implicated in emotional responses, but the brain structure called the **amygdala** has long been known to be important. The amygdala is part of a group of brain structures involved in emotion, memory, and basic motivational drives such as hunger, thirst, and sex. There appear to be two neural pathways for fear (DeDoux, 2000). In most cases, information comes in through the senses to the thalamus and then is relayed to the cerebral cortex for a decision about what to do. But, when something frightening occurs, the sensory information takes a short cut and goes to the amygdala and produces a fear reaction before the cortex has an opportunity to assess the threat.

For example, my wife says that I have a wonderful startle reaction. That is why she occasionally jumps out and yells “Boo” when I walk through the front door. Before I’ve had a chance to process the auditory information regarding who or what just made that sound, the amygdala kicks in and I respond by dropping my books, yelling, and jumping three feet.

Although the physiological basis for emotions is interesting, most people are more interested in what to do with their feelings than in what physiological functions caused them.

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Associating and Dissociating

Have you ever been in the middle of an argument and suddenly seen the situation from outside yourself and found it incredibly funny? Maybe imagining how you looked to the other person changed your whole feeling about the situation. Most of us, at times, are able to actually step outside ourselves and view the situation from another perspective. That distance, artificially created, offers a different experience and changes the feeling of the original situation. This is called **dissociating**; it’s useful when you want to decrease the intensity of an emotion.

Most of us, on the other hand, have also created unnecessary emotions. Have you ever experienced sitting calmly in a pleasant situation and starting to feel bad as you began imagining some future event about which you were worried? That occurred because you imaginatively put yourself into a situation and acted as if it were really

happening. This is called **associating**—you put yourself into a situation as if it were happening to you; it’s useful when you want to increase the intensity of an emotion.

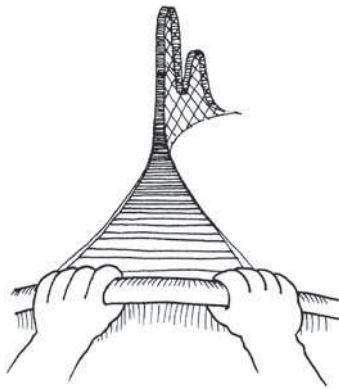
To understand the impact of association and dissociation, try the following experiment. First, imagine sitting in your living room getting ready to watch old home movies. As you look at the blank screen, remember a time in the past when you were getting ready to take a roller coaster ride. Can you see yourself on the screen as you got into the roller car? Watch as you and the other people sit down and get strapped into the seats. Can you see all the cars of the roller coaster as it approaches the top of the big drop? Watch the ups and downs of the ride as if someone else had taken pictures from the ground while you were on it. As it comes to an end, what do you look like getting off the ride? Notice the level of feeling that you had while recalling that memory.

Now let’s try an entirely different way of remembering that roller coaster experience. In this second perspective, step into that movie at the beginning. Imagine you are there now and can see and hear everything going on around you as you get into the car for the ride. As you feel the seat underneath you, you can hear the sound of the bar coming down across your lap. What does the bar feel like as you reach out and grip it? As the ride starts and you are pressed back in the seat, what do you see ahead of you? Can you hear the clicking of the wheels on the track as you look up into the sky while making the first ascent? After that brief pause at the top, what do you hear, see, and feel as you race down that big drop—all the way to the bottom—and start the rush up the other side? Continue to experience the ride in this manner all the way through to the end. As you get off the ride, how are you feeling? What are the people around you saying? What does the world look like to you as you walk away from the ride? Now assess your feelings and reactions to this way of remembering your roller coaster ride.

For most people, the first experience decreases emotional response and the second increases it. If you think about an event as though it were happening in the present, you will probably experience a greater degree of feelings than if you think about it as though it happened long ago or happened to someone else. Understanding this process is the key to emotional control.

INCREASING FEELINGS: ASSOCIATING In situations where it would be useful to experience and express your feelings, try the following:

- 1. Experience the event fully in the present:** Don’t let your mind wander. Your capacity for emotional response will increase when you focus on the moment that your feelings are happening.
- 2. Stay with the experience and stay in your body:** Look out of your own eyes and see the event from inside the movie as it is happening to you.
- 3. Be aware of your self-talk:** Describe the feelings you are having and give yourself permission to experience your feelings.



The movie industry discovered association long ago. Think of the last time you saw a movie in which, instead of just watching a car chase, the movie actually put you in the driver's seat. The view on the screen was what you would see if you really were driving. This technique is also used in horror films to increase tension and emotions. You don't just watch the scene of zombies attacking people, you are actually seeing through the eyes of the victim ... or the attacker. This technique is quite effective at increasing audience response as well as industry profits. Today, getting the audience to be totally associated with the experiences in movies has become standard procedure.

DECREASING FEELINGS: DISSOCIATING In situations where it would be useful to control or diminish your emotional response, try the following in order to dissociate:

1. **Imagine the event has already happened and is in the past:** Remember the example of watching the roller coaster ride as an old home movie?
2. **Step out of yourself:** Whether the event is a memory or is currently taking place, see your interactions from the perspective of watching an old movie about what was happening. Or you can think of yourself in another time and place. Have you ever been so involved in a daydream that you were completely oblivious to what was happening in the present?
3. **Be aware of your self-talk:** Be *directive* and tell yourself what to do or not to do regarding the feeling. Use the part of yourself that is watching, assessing, and commenting on your behavior to say things like, "Hold on, wait a minute, not here, is this really useful?"



The ability to dissociate is valuable when someone is trying to get you (such as your children) and you don't want to get "got." We are usually more patient and resourceful if we can remember to step out and not take the behavior of others personally. For example, on one occasion I could tell from the sound of her footsteps on the stairs that my daughter had a bad day at school. She proceeded to try and make sure I had a bad day, too. I dissociated and watched the interaction as if it were happening to someone else. As I imagined watching myself, I thought about how I would behave if I were demonstrating intervention techniques to use with children. (It is amazing how different you can be if you think that others are watching you.) Pretending that I was doing a demonstration for a psychology class kept me focused on how to be resourceful. By watching the interaction as if it were a movie, I was able to keep things in perspective. I became curious about her needs and thought about how to connect with her on a meaningful level.

Another technique I used was to imagine that someone else's child was doing an unwanted behavior. For example, once when my son spilled his milk for the second time at the same meal, I could feel myself start to approach the breaking point. If I dissociated, though, and thought of him as the neighbor's child, it was amazing how much more patient and understanding I was. By dissociating, we can relate to our own children in a detached yet caring way.

GENDER DIFFERENCES We all associate and dissociate even when we don't know it. For example, men and women frequently have dissimilar emotional responses to the same event because they associate or dissociate differently. Imagine that a man and a woman are watching a movie on television. When the movie gets to the sad, emotional, or romantic scene, the woman might step into the movie and become fully associated with the experience. She doesn't just watch it, she lives it! Meanwhile, the man might have dissociated himself from the scene. He sees it as being about someone else and not in the here and now. He may observe from an analytical position and think about what the scene has to do with the story.

Now consider the action parts of the movie. The man might now step into the movie and fully experience the explosions. He isn't just watching *Vin Diesel*; he *is* *Vin Diesel*! Where is the woman? To her, it's just a movie. She is keeping the experience at a distance. She experiences it from a dissociated state.

Of course, these reactions don't apply to all men and women (remember the 90% rule). I'm using the example merely to illustrate how we can be in control of creating different emotional states if we want to.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING EMOTIONS There is a difference between our ability to empathize with other people's feelings (**incoming emotions**) and to experience



or express our own feelings (**outgoing emotions**). Some people are very aware of their own feelings and have no trouble expressing them, but are oblivious to the feelings of other people and what they might be experiencing. For others, that is reversed: they downplay their own emotional response while being overly focused on what others might be feeling.

There are four combinations of incoming and outgoing emotional expression and the associated or dissociated mode of experience. The following are characteristics of each of the four types.

1. **Feelers:** Feelers are the people who are associated when it comes to experiencing others’ emotions as well as their own. They tend to be in touch with their own feelings and are comfortable with the outgoing expression of them. They also step into what they perceive others to be feeling and experience the emotions as though they were their own. Such over-empathy can sometimes turn people into “Red Cross nurses,” trying to save everyone else at their own expense.
2. **Sponges:** Sponges are people who experience everyone else’s emotions but ignore their own. They associate with incoming emotions but dissociate from their own. They soak up everything around them, further masking their own feelings, which they may already object to expressing. These people frequently benefit from diminishing their concern for others’ feelings and increasing their awareness of their own.
3. **Blamers:** Some people easily step into their own feelings and increase them, and then vent them on others because it is easier to deal with outgoing feelings. It’s ironic, though, that these same people then put up a stone wall against incoming emotions and acknowledging the feelings of others. They know how to dissociate, but might benefit from reversing the situations in which they do that—stepping out of their own feelings but being available when others express their emotions.
4. **Spocks:** Spocks are constantly dissociated. They downplay their own emotions as well as other people’s. Decreasing emotions can be useful in some circumstances, but constant dissociation is tough on personal relationships and family life.

As you consider this information, keep in mind the choice and balance concept. Each response may or may

Incoming Emotions
(Feelings Expressed by Others to You)

		Incoming Emotions (Feelings Expressed by Others to You)	
		Experience	Do Not Experience
Outgoing Emotions (Your Feelings Expressed to Others)	Experience	 Feeler	 Blamer
	Do Not Experience	 Sponge	 Spock

not be useful depending on the context. We need to be aware of what we have a tendency to do, and use the ability to act differently at times when it is beneficial to do so.

The Cognitive Component of Emotions and Thought Distortion

As previously discussed, emotions have a cognitive component: your feelings are affected to a significant degree by the thoughts that you have about a given situation. When you overreact to something or someone, it is usually

Thought Question 4.2

What type of person do you tend to be most like—Sponge, Feeler, Blamer, or Spock? What do you need to do more of, and less of, regarding emotions? How can you be more balanced?

due to playing an old tape in your head about what that situation means, a habitual thought pattern that has been built up from past experiences of similar situations. When the words in your internal dialogue describe the situation as being worse than it really is, you often have a stronger emotional response than might be appropriate. Similarly the negative aspects of stress are frequently brought on by your beliefs about what should or shouldn't be happening to you. Thus, stress and difficulty in coping with emotions frequently share the common element of distorted thought processes. *It is not so much what happens to you in life; it's the way you think about it that determines how you feel.*

As mentioned by David Burns (1999a) in his book *The Feeling Good Handbook*, unhealthy negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, excessive anger, and inappropriate guilt are caused by illogical, distorted thoughts. This includes the thoughts that seem valid at the time of an event. Burns suggests learning to look at things more realistically by getting rid of the kinds of distorted thinking patterns listed in the *Cognitive Restructuring* section of Chapter 2. He believes one can break out of depression or a bad mood, often in a short period of time, by doing the following:

1. Identify the situation that is upsetting you.
2. Identify the distortions in your thoughts from the list in Chapter 2.
3. Imagine how you could think differently and how you would act if you did.
4. Make sure that your change in thinking is not just an intellectual exercise and that you have effected a change on the gut level. It is important to put your new way of thinking, and the resulting behavior, into action.
5. Change your physiology. Some people get stuck in a particular emotional response because they freeze their body into the posture that they have had in the past when they were having that emotion. To change your mood, sometimes you have to move your body. Get up and move around.
6. Make sure that you continue to breathe with as normal a pattern as possible, because oxygen is a prerequisite to all other activities, and you will think better if you aren't holding your breath.

EXPERIENCING EMOTIONS

Now that we've talked about emotions in general, I'm going to emphasize individual emotions—anger, sadness, and guilt—what they are, where they come from, and how to gain control over them. (We talked about fear earlier and we will explore happiness, joy, and excitement in Chapter 11.)

Anger

THE NATURE OF ANGER Anger and its various forms of expression are part of everyone's life. It is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out

of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems—at work, in personal relationships, in health, and in the overall quality of your life. And it can make you feel as though you're at the mercy of something unpredictable and powerful.

Anger varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. Like other emotions, it is accompanied by physiological and biological changes; when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones: adrenaline and noradrenaline. Because of these physiological responses, long-term health outcomes of chronic anger are coronary heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, breast cancer, and ultimately higher mortality rates (Broman and Johnson, 1988).

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry at a specific person (such as a coworker or supervisor) or event (a traffic jam or canceled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying or brooding about your personal problems. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

The best advice is to address your anger and reflect on the triggers that create it. Instead of letting problems fester, address anger-causing problems right away. If it's a person and you can't approach the instigator, then at least discuss it with a trusted friend or relative.

Remember, emotions themselves are neither right nor wrong—they simply are. However, it is important to consider the context and/or outcome of these emotions. People who are taken advantage of because they are always nice to everyone, or those who bottle up their anger for 20 years and then develop ulcers, would probably benefit from expressing their anger more. On the other hand, those who most need help in dealing with their anger because they have violent outbursts or even become physically abusive are, unfortunately, seldom the ones who seek help. They may believe that anger is a powerful tool for getting what they want because it frightens people. They don't notice that how they express themselves relates directly to how much and what type of assistance they receive back from others. This self-defeating behavior leads to a cycle of frustration because the angrier they get, the less they get what they want.

The paradox is that the people who need to moderate their expression of anger and become more aware of its effects on others seldom do so, whereas those who could benefit from expressing their anger and speaking up have difficulty letting go of their concern about how their anger will affect other people.

WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE MORE ANGRY THAN OTHERS?

According to Jerry Deffenbacher, a psychologist who specializes in anger management, some people really are more "hotheaded" than others; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person (Deffenbacher and McCay, 2000). These people have a low tolerance for frustration. They can't take things in stride, and they're

particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust, for example, being corrected for a minor mistake. Easily angered people don't always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw socially, sulk, are grumpy, or get physically ill.

What makes these people this way? A number of things. One cause may be genetic or physiological: There is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy, and easily angered, and that these signs are present from a very early age.

Another cause is sociocultural. Anger is often regarded as negative; we're taught that it's all right to express anxiety, depression, or other emotions but not to express anger. As a result, we don't learn how to handle it or channel it constructively. One aspect of this is early training in the family. We all grow up with messages about what to do with anger, such as "Don't you raise your voice to me" and "You had better get control of yourself right now." Often the most powerful messages are the ones that aren't spoken out loud. Have you ever seen a parent screaming at their child, "It's wrong to hit someone" while spanking them? Powerful messages are being conveyed in that situation about what to do with angry feelings. Is it any wonder that some of us grow up confused?

One method of exploring dealing with anger is to look to your parents. How did they express anger with each other, with their children, and with others in the world? What did you learn from them about handling angry feelings? Whether you modeled their behavior or went in the opposite direction, you were influenced by your parents.

EXPRESSING ANGER Some people respond to anger by acting aggressively. Sometimes this is appropriate. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats that allows us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. On the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us.

Suppressing anger isn't always the best solution either. The danger is that if it isn't allowed outward expression, your anger can turn inward—on yourself—and may cause hypertension, high blood pressure, or depression. Unexpressed anger can create other problems as well. It can lead to pathological expressions of anger, such as passive-aggressive behavior (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why, rather than confronting them head-on) or a personality that seems perpetually cynical and hostile. People who are constantly putting others down, criticizing everything, and making cynical comments haven't learned how to constructively express their anger. Not surprisingly, they aren't likely to have many successful relationships.

Instead of trying to suppress anger, you can acknowledge it and then take steps to calm down inside. The goal of anger management is not to suppress it, but to reduce both your emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger causes. You can't always avoid or change the things or the people that enrage you, but you can learn to manage your reactions and to express your anger in calm and appropriate ways.

GAINING CONTROL Psychologists now say that "letting it all hang out" is a dangerous way to handle anger. Some people use this theory as a license to hurt others. Research

Case Studies and Student Stories

As a small child, James remembered tearing apart vacuum cleaners or burying his toys in the park to express his anger. Whenever something made him mad, he either broke it or buried it. The strategy seemed to work for awhile. But, as an adult, neither one of these methods seemed to contain his anger. He found that beating the sides of his car or breaking out windows in his house temporarily helped, but he realized it was not accomplishing anything. Still, whenever he got angry he had no idea how to deal with it, so he continued the unhealthy pattern.

Each day James resolved that he was going to end his violent outbursts of anger, and each evening he felt guilty for the things that he had done during the day. From kicking the cat to screaming at someone who had pulled out in front of him, his anger continued to plague him.

One morning James woke up feeling like he was consumed with rage. He cussed out the garbage man for accidentally spilling garbage, yelled at his neighbor for waking him up to give him his morning paper, and when the doorbell rang for the fourth time in an hour he opened it with anger all over his face.

Looking straight ahead he could not see the little boy standing at the door. As he growled and began to shut the door, a frightened scream emerged from the boy: "Please don't hurt

me." As the child ran down the street, James sat down on his front porch and began to cry.

He realized that if he didn't do something about managing his anger, he was going to hurt someone or himself. It was with this resolve that he found an anger management class, and the process of James's healing began.

He met other people who suffered from the same emotional problem that he did, and he began to try anything that was suggested. He found that getting more exercise was a way to reduce tension. He attended to his self-talk and found that he blamed everyone else for his problems and had fallen prey to the belief that life should be fair and equal. He discovered that he could slow down his immediate angry response by writing down his self-talk and what he imagined others were thinking and doing. He learned to vent his frustrations in a more appropriate manner. It wasn't an easy road for James, but things started to get better. James no longer takes apart "toys" or breaks windows, and he has found new ways to vent his anger. On any given night, if you are in the vicinity of the local park, you just might hear him howling at the moon. He says the sound soothes his anger and enables him to feel better without making someone else feel bad.

Source: Written by D. Juanita Woods.

has found that “letting it rip” with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you (or the person you’re angry with) resolve the situation. This section provides several better ways to handle anger.

First, be aware that you have more control than you might be aware of. For example, people who throw things in anger usually go through a whole series of decisions before actually breaking anything. Some little voice says, “Something of theirs, not mine,” or “The \$5 vase, not the \$500 one,” or “Not through the window, you’ll have to fix it. Yes, the fireplace. It’ll look great when it smashes.” People who can step out of themselves long enough to make those decisions already have the key to learning to dissociate long enough to consider other options as well.

Another example of having more control than you’re aware of happens when you’re in the middle of an argument and the phone rings. Isn’t it incredible how cultural conditioning brings everything to a stop when the phone rings? One of the participants walks over and answers the phone with a pleasant, “Hello. Oh, just fine. How are you doing?” If you can push the pause button long enough to answer a phone call, why not use that same strategy to step out and consider other options, or at least to notice if your anger is getting the desired results?

Another way to gain control is to consider past times when you were able to control your anger. Compare that incident to a time when you did lose control. What was the difference? A third approach is to find out what it is that triggers your anger, and then to develop strategies, such as the following, to keep those triggers from tipping you over the edge.

1. Relax: Simple relaxation tools, such as the following, can help calm down angry feelings.

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest won’t relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your “gut.”
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax” or “take it easy.” Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
- Non-strenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.
- Practice these techniques, and learn to use them automatically when you’re in a tense situation.

2. Change your environment: Sometimes it’s our immediate surroundings that give us cause for irritation and fury. Try giving yourself a break. For example, make sure you have some “personal time” scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful. Or, if you and your spouse tend to fight when you discuss things at night—perhaps you’re tired, or distracted, or maybe it’s just habit—try changing the times when you talk about important matters so that these talks don’t turn into arguments. Or, if your child’s chaotic room makes you furious every time you walk by it, shut the door. Don’t make your-

self look at what infuriates you. Don’t say, “Well, my child should clean up the room so I won’t have to be angry!” That’s not the point. The point is to keep yourself calm.

3. Change your physiology: There is a reason why so many mental health specialists recommend exercise as a means of dealing with anger, stress, and tension. Just changing your body position can sometimes alter your mood. Therefore, if you are upset, get up and move. Change how you are sitting or standing and notice if uncrossing your arms makes a difference. Some therapists even recommend that you just try to smile even when you aren’t particularly happy. A change in facial expression can sometimes change emotions. A counseling axiom is: *If you change the physiology, you can change the emotion.*

4. Cognitive restructuring: Simply put, this means changing the way you think. When you’re angry, your thinking can get very exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, “Oh, it’s awful, it’s terrible, everything’s ruined,” tell yourself, “It’s frustrating, and it’s understandable that I’m upset about it, but it’s not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow.”

Be careful of words like *never* or *always* when talking about yourself or someone else. These words can alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution. Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix anything, and that it won’t make you feel better (and may actually make you feel worse).

Irrational Beliefs

1. It is essential that one be loved or approved of by virtually everyone in one’s community.
2. One must be perfectly competent and achieving to consider oneself worthwhile.
3. Some people are wicked or villainous, and therefore should be blamed and punished.
4. It is a terrible catastrophe when things are not as one wants them to be.
5. Unhappiness is caused by outside circumstances; the individual has no control over it.
6. Dangerous or fearsome things are causes for great concern, and their possibility must be continually dwelt upon.
7. One should be dependent on others and must have someone stronger on whom to rely.
8. One should be quite upset over other people’s problems and disturbances.
9. There is always a right or perfect solution to every problem, and it must be found or the results will be catastrophic.

Based on: Albert Ellis, 1984. *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*. Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart.

5. Dispute irrational beliefs: Albert Ellis, a proponent of rational-emotive therapy (RET), says that, frequently, disappointment and its subsequent anger are due to unrealistic expectations of the world in general. Life is not fair or equal and probably never will be. Part of the human condition is dealing with disappointments; it is useful to accept some events in life as par for the course rather than as reasons for anger.

6. Identify the true emotion: Get in touch with what is beneath the anger, which quite often is sadness. People frequently react to pain or sadness by being angry. This behavior derives from the mistaken notion that one can gain some measure of control over sadness by ranting and raving at someone else. When you allow yourself your true feelings, the need to over-react by getting angry will diminish.

Guilt

Guilt is a feeling of responsibility for negative circumstances that have befallen yourself or others. It is a feeling of regret for your real or imagined misdeeds, both past and present. It can be a sense of remorse for thoughts, feelings, or attitudes that were or are negative, uncomplimentary, or non-accepting concerning yourself or others. Guilt is a complex emotion that can incorporate feelings of obligation for not pleasing or not helping another. It can include feelings of loss and shame for not having done or said something when you wish you had.

Keeping Your Cool

Reappraise the situation: When you are provoked by someone, consider the source. Maybe it means more about them than it does about you. Rather than saying something negative to yourself about the other person, try to empathize or find justification for his or her actions.

The old standard count to ten: First, count to ten. Then use a technique the experts call reflective coping, which means trying to solve the underlying problem or source of anger.

Keep an anger diary: Become an expert on your own anger. Write down each episode and all the particulars of the situation. This helps to demystify the emotion and shows that it isn't an uncontrollable force.

Sweat it out: Vigorous exercise is an excellent outlet for powerful emotions, including anger.

Cut your losses: If there's no possibility of effecting a change, then remove yourself from the anger-provoking situation.

Source: Carol Tavris, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Anger Is a Frightening, Painful Feeling for Some

Anger is a scary subject for people who never learned how to express it appropriately or recognize it as a healthy, normal feeling. You may have a problem with anger if:

- You're frightened around angry people.
- You swallow your anger instead of saying how you feel.
- You avoid conflict at any cost.
- You hurt people or things when you're angry.
- You're afraid that if you ever let yourself get good and mad, you'd kill someone.
- Others complain about or seem uncomfortable with your so-called teasing.
- You don't feel angry, but you get sick a lot and suffer assorted bodily aches.
- You fear the consequences of expressing anger (e.g., your partner may leave, you could get fired, or your children may not love you).
- You say things like "There's not an angry bone in my body" and "I don't get angry—I get even!"
- You don't feel angry—but people say you seem angry.

Guilt can be, and often is, anger turned inward. When we're angry at someone the gun is aimed at *them*. When we're feeling guilty, *we* are under the gun. No one can achieve perfection. Yet many of us insist that we must never make mistakes or do anything wrong because we're unconsciously trying to prove our worth, to ourselves and to the world, to maintain a good rating.

Guilt can lock us in, though. If every time we catch ourselves at some wrongdoing, we begin to attack ourselves, soon we're going to be feeling pretty hopeless. A person should be careful to limit feelings of regret over wrongdoing. We all have bad habits, and it will take time to change them. You may need to learn first to be more patient with yourself.

Guilt usually comes in two varieties. There is the regret and remorse that arise from actual wrongdoing. This is **constructive** guilt. It is part of the process of behavior correction, which has three steps: (a) admitting that we've done wrong, (b) expressing remorse and regret over the wrong, (c) resolving to avoid repeating the wrong. The guilt we're talking about here, though, is of the **destructive** sort. It, too, begins with an admission of wrongdoing. But now, instead of appropriate regret and a firm resolve to avoid repetition, we viciously attack ourselves and end up feeling spent and miserable. Destructive guilt can:

- **Make you become overly responsible:** You strive to make life "right." You overwork. You give too much of yourself. You are willing to do anything in your attempts to make everyone happy.
- **Make you overly conscientious:** You fret over every action you take as to its possible negative consequences for others, even if this means that you must ignore your own needs and wants.

- **Make you overly sensitive:** You see decisions about right and wrong in every aspect of your life and become obsessed with the potential fallibility of all of your personal actions, words, and decisions.
- **Immobilize you:** You can become so overcome by the fear of doing, acting, saying, or being “wrong” that you eventually collapse, give in, and choose inactivity, silence, and the status quo.
- **Interfere in your decision making:** It is so important to always be “right” in your decisions that you become unable to make a decision lest it be a wrong one.
- **Be hidden by the mask of self-denial:** Because it is less guilt-inducing to take care of others first instead of yourself, you hide behind the mask of self-denial. You honestly believe it is better to serve others first, unaware that “guilt” is the motivator for such “generous” behavior.
- **Make you ignore the full array of emotions and feelings available to you:** Overcome by guilt or the fear of it, you can become emotionally blocked or closed off. You are able to neither enjoy the positive fruits of life nor experience the other negative aspects.

Remember that the minute we become more aware of our mistakes, they are no longer failures. They become steps in the process of becoming better as a person. *Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from poor judgment.* So we can profit from our mistakes, rather than criticize ourselves for them. Thus, guilt can be a motivator to change. Because you feel guilt and the discomfort it brings, you can use it as a barometer of the need to change things in your life and rid yourself of the guilt.

Sadness

There seems to be a national conspiracy to avoid being anything less than fine. “How are you doing?” The answer is “Fine!” We are all fine, and we are supposed to be fine all the time. Even feeling neutral is seen as a violation of the natural order of things. Have you ever had a day when you were just feeling middle-of-the-road, neither up nor down, and had people ask you, “What’s wrong?” We all have down times and even need some neutral moments to balance out the cycles of life.

There are experts in the counseling field who suggest that being able to experience joy and happiness in life is connected with the willingness to also experience sadness. To feel alive and exuberant, we must also surrender to our pain and sadness at times. This is the concept: *limit one feeling, limit them all.*

To explore your beliefs about sadness, answer the following questions: How often do people need to cry? How often should they cry? How often would people cry if they let themselves?

If you answered, “Whenever they need to,” how often would that be: once a day, once a week, once a month, once a year? When was the last time you cried?

Some people think that you could cry once a week if you let yourself, and yet they haven’t let themselves cry in a year. What does that say? Do you have different sets of rules for yourself and for other people?

Most people inhibit themselves when it comes to expressing sadness. And yet, paradoxically, they report feeling much better after having a good cry. Why do we have objections to feeling sad? The answer, in part, goes back to families and how you were treated as a child when

Suggested Steps to Overcome Unnecessary Guilt

Step 1 You can recognize the role guilt is playing in your life by choosing a current problem and answering the following questions:

- What problem is currently troubling me?
- Who is responsible for the problem?
- How much guilt do I feel about this problem?
- If I felt no more guilt, what would my problem look like then?

In answering these questions you are recognizing the role that guilt is playing in preventing resolution of the problem.

Step 2 Redefine your problem with the absence of guilt as an issue by answering the following questions:

- How insurmountable is the problem?
- Is this problem an interpersonal or intrapersonal problem?
 - If it is interpersonal: Can I help the other person and myself to set aside guilt and resolve this problem?
 - If it is intrapersonal: Can I set aside guilt or the fear of it and resolve this problem?
- Is it my problem or another’s? Am I taking on another’s responsibility?

Step 3 If the problem is really someone else’s, try to give the problem back to the person(s) to solve and to deal with. If you can’t give the problem back or if the problem is yours, go to Step 4.

Step 4 You must confront the real or imagined guilt or fear of guilt preventing you either from handing the problem back to the person(s) whose problem it really is (Step 3) or from handling the problem on your own. Consider the following:

- What fears are blocking me at this moment from taking the steps I need to resolve this problem?
- What are the irrational beliefs behind these fears?
- Refute the irrational beliefs.
- Initiate a program of self-affirmation.

Step 5 If your guilt is not resolved after completing Steps 3 and/or 4, affirm for yourself that:

- You deserve to solve this problem.
- You deserve to be good to yourself.
- You deserve to have others be good to you, too!

Then return to Step 1 and begin again.

you cried. What was the response of your parents and siblings to crying? That early training can affect you well into adulthood.

This is especially true for men in our society. From a very young age, boys are expected to cope with pain and sadness without crying. This message is delivered in various ways. The six-year-old boy who cries at being left at school on the first day is called a sissy. The nine-year-old boy who gets hit between the eyes while playing baseball is expected to shake it off and act like a man; then he is given a round of applause for managing to stay on his feet and stagger to first base. By adolescence, most males have been thoroughly versed in the notion that the only acceptable way to deal with pain is to inflict it on others. Hence, the teenage boy who has been jilted goes out and gets in a fight or destroys property; 30 years later, this man may be in therapy because he hasn't learned any other method of coping.

There can be long-term consequences of not expressing sadness. An example is a man who said he hadn't cried in 25 years. That didn't seem like a problem to him until his father died, and he couldn't cry at the funeral even though he wanted to and thought he should. Over the next few years, he came to understand that he vented this unexpressed sadness on those around him in a hostile way. After his wife left him, his kids refused to talk to him, and his boss fired him for having a bad attitude, he finally cried. He cried for three days and thought he was having a nervous breakdown. Well, he wasn't having a breakdown, he was having a breakthrough!

In counseling, he learned that many of his problems were due to his inability to experience or share his sadness. As he learned to be in touch with his feelings in the present, he could stay with them long enough to express them. Then he could go back to some earlier events in his life and allow himself to have the feelings he had cut off before. By stepping into a situation, being associated, and imagining it as the present, he could have the feelings he had needed to have for so long. He came to realize that in trying to avoid pain, he had only caused himself more.

On the other end of the continuum are people who experience their feelings readily but then keep replaying the tape long after it has any use or value. For example, an 18-year-old girl came into my office in tears, talking about a lost love and broken romance. Had the relationship just ended? Well, it had ended about six months ago. Had they known each other for a long time? Oh, yes, about three weeks. It seemed that each time she heard "their song," she relived the moment of the breakup. She didn't need to get into her feelings; she needed to get out of them.

If you need to let go of an event in your life, dissociate: See it as an old movie from long ago. See yourself from the position of the director of that scene and tell yourself, "Thank goodness that's over." Before putting something in the past, though, be sure to check out your objection to letting it go. If you are still feeling sad about some long-ago event, it may be serving some unconscious purpose for you.

"It hurts to lose something important. It hurts worse to pretend otherwise. To expect more than reality can offer only sets you up to hurt badly and needlessly."

David Viscott

For example, a woman still mourning the death of her husband after 10 years knew it was time to put it to rest, yet some part of her objected to letting go of being sad. By exploring her motives for continuing to feel sad, she discovered that she believed she was being a good wife by honoring and keeping alive the memory of her late husband. After redefining the meaning of being a good wife, she was free to find new options for honoring and preserving the memory of her husband.

Emotional Intelligence

The phrase **emotional intelligence** was coined by Yale psychologist Peter Salovey and the University of New Hampshire's John Mayer. The term describes such qualities as understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others, and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living (Salovey and Mayer, 1989–1990). Emotional intelligence reflects the functioning of your emotional brain just as IQ reflects the thinking part of your brain. Emotional intelligence is a key tool for getting along with others, taking control of your life, thinking clearly, and making decisions. EQ is not the opposite of IQ. Some people are blessed with a lot of both, and others seem to have very little of either.

Goleman (author of the 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence*) brought together a decade's worth of behavioral research into how the mind processes feelings. His thesis: When it comes to predicting people's success, brainpower as measured by IQ and standardized achievement tests may actually matter less than the personal qualities once thought of as *character*.

Other researchers generally agree that IQ counts for only about 20 percent of success; the rest is due to other factors. For example, Karen Boylston, from the Center for Creative Leadership, reports that customers are telling businesses, "I don't care if every member of your staff graduated with honors from Harvard or Stanford. I will take my business where I am understood and respected" (Goleman, 1995, p. 136). Goleman feels that, given the number of social problems we face in this country, there should be a demand for remedial emotional education.

"Life is like an onion. You peel it back one layer at a time, and sometimes you cry."

Carl Sandburg

COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE Emotional intelligence is made up of five closely related factors:

- **Self-awareness:** When making a decision, your brain doesn't unemotionally tally up the pros and cons to produce a neat printout. Instead, it processes all the relevant data, which in turn helps you produce a feeling about what you should do. When your emotional brain is working well, this feeling is shaped by your entire life's wisdom and experience. If you're not in touch with your feelings, you won't hear this emotional message.
- **Mood management:** Depression, anxiety, and anger interfere with working memory—your brain's ability to integrate facts and ideas. This prevents you from thinking straight or working smart. Emotional intelligence allows you to manage your moods by cheering yourself up when you're down, calming yourself when you're anxious, and expressing your anger effectively when you are upset.
- **Motivation:** The ability to maintain hope and optimism—even when you encounter setbacks—is crucial in working effectively toward your goals.
- **Empathy:** Sensitivity to other people's feelings is a key to understanding their needs and modifying your behavior. In marriage, empathy means fewer fights and less stress. At work, it's a key management skill.
- **Social skill:** The ability to deal with the emotions of others—to harmonize, persuade, and lead—draws on all aspects of emotional intelligence; for example, a study conducted at Bell Laboratory found that the most trusted, valued employees don't stand out because of their IQs or academic backgrounds, but because of their ability to get along with others. Emotional intelligence is the key to being a team player, and it is perhaps the most critical tool available in the workplace today.

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE Like IQ, emotional intelligence is partially predetermined by the brain with which you were born. But emotional intelligence can be shaped, much more so than IQ, by learning from repeated experiences in life. Here's how to boost your emotional intelligence:

- **Make a habit of self-awareness:** You can dramatically improve your emotional intelligence by listening to yourself, thinking about your feelings, and observing your own as you talk to co-workers and friends, or ponder decisions.
- **Learn skills to calm anxious feelings:** When you're nervous or worried, activities such as exercise, listening to music, or doing a hobby will distract you. Practicing a relaxation exercise, such as those described in the section on anger, enables you to be able to call on calmness when you feel anxiety building up.
- **Find ways to lift your mood when you're down:** Some feelings of anxiety can improve performance. Prolonged or intense anxiety, however, can

distract you and cloud your judgment and perspective. Strategies: a brisk walk or completing a long-postponed household chore.

- **Fine-tune your empathy:** Trying to understand the feelings of others helps heighten your emotional sensitivity. One way to do this is to compare your reading of someone's emotional state with what he or she is actually feeling.
- **Increase motivation by nurturing hope:** When your confidence dips, set a new goal immediately, determine what it will take to reach it, and resolve to use your energy and persistence to pursue those steps. This moves you toward a more optimistic mind-set.
- **Improve specific social skills:** Heighten harmony at home by listening and speaking to others **non-defensively**. Resist the urge to defend yourself against criticism. Try to separate the criticism or the anger from the emotional message that is behind it. For example, someone who says, "You're always so selfish" may actually mean, "I feel so hurt."
- **Tune in to the feelings that complicate your relationships:** Feelings of self-righteousness or the feeling that you are an "innocent victim" can become a toxic habit. These feelings are really excuses. When you find yourself thinking this way, stop and challenge these thoughts. For example, in an argument, recognize when strong emotions threaten to overwhelm reason. Agree to call a 20-minute time-out so you can cool down with your self-management skills. Also, be frugal with your criticism and generous with praise at work. When you must criticize an employee or a co-worker, try to do it artfully—and do it in private. Empathy for the feelings of the person who is receiving the comments gets results, while an insensitive put-down creates resentment and bitterness between you.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress

Stress occurs in reaction to any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one's well-being and thereby taxes one's coping abilities (Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012). Stress is a part of everyday life and has entered our vocabulary to the extent that practically everyone knows what it means when someone is stressed-out.

Not only do our jobs, school, and relationships cause stress, but it appears that the little everyday hassles actually have a greater impact on our mental health than some major events. This is possibly due to a cumulative effect which causes stress to add up. While some kinds of stress are highly personal, there are other kinds that originate from circumstances in the environment. The term **ambient stress** refers to chronic conditions that place adaptive demands on people. Crowding has long been known to

be a source of stress, and many of our cities are becoming increasingly dense in population. And, anyone who has lived near an airport knows that exposure to high levels of noise can have a negative effect on well-being. Even when there isn't an apparent immediate threat, living in poverty or in an area prone to violence can create high levels of stress.

According to an American Psychological Association poll (2007), stress is on the rise, with a third of respondents stating that they were experiencing extreme levels of stress. It appears that stress has become a hallmark of modern life. All the more reason for learning how to manage it.

It is important to note that the level of stress you feel depends on what events you notice and how you choose to interpret the events that occur around you. What might feel threatening to one person could be perceived entirely differently by another; one person's fear is another person's excitement. Some people would rather die than jump out of a perfectly good airplane, while others can hardly wait for the next opportunity to free fall when sky diving. There are people who come alive with the excitement of performing in front of a crowd, while others would die before going on stage.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF STRESS A little bit of stress might be useful. If you didn't have some stress you might not be motivated to accomplish the things necessary for living a productive life. There are also positive aspects of stress that are only apparent in the aftermath of a difficult situation.

First, there can be **post-traumatic growth**. There are numerous stressful events that are beyond your control and necessitate a change in your lifestyle. Yet, there are numerous examples of people who have dealt with cancer, lost a loved one, or experienced some form of violence, who come out the other side having developed new strengths as a result of the incident (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004).

Second, stressful events can satisfy the need that some people have for excitement and the opportunity to rise to the challenge of a difficult task. Many people, if they lived in a completely stress-free environment, would call it boring. The need for some form of stress appears to be a basic need of human beings.

Third, having some stress enables you to learn how to deal with difficult situations so that you might be better prepared for dealing with even more difficult situations that might arise in the future. Having experienced a setback in life in one area may enable you to cope more effectively with problems in the future in some other area. Although it is a bit trite and over-stated, perhaps there is something to the popular saying *what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger*.

Sources of Stress

There are a number of ways to categorize different types of stress, but almost all can be divided into three major subtypes. Stressors can be **acute**, **chronic**, or **anticipatory**.

Acute stressors are the events that are usually short-term and have some ending point for the resolution of the event. You may experience anxiety over an upcoming test, but you know that after a certain date it will be over. Chronic stressors are events that are problematic and that are likely to have a long duration, with no apparent precise ending point. Having financial difficulties may take years to resolve and being unemployed may depend on external factors that could take some time to change.

Anticipatory stressors are concerns about future events. People can become extremely anxious about something that hasn't even happened and that might even be considerably far off in the future. For example, I once had to give a keynote address at a conference and was a basket case for three months. Sometimes we might even spend weeks or months worrying about some impending event that doesn't even happen. The problem with anticipatory stress is that it can have the same effect physically and psychologically as if the event had really occurred. Robert Sapolsky (2004) wrote a book entitled *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* in which he describes methods for coping with stress. Animals experience threatening situations frequently, especially those in the wild, but they don't lay around thinking up horrible situations and worrying about what might happen tomorrow at the watering hole. Perhaps one way to reduce and manage stress in our lives is to take a cue from our dogs and cats. They have a remarkable ability to just lie in the sun and enjoy the moment.

However we classify stressors, it can be useful to examine four major sources that create stress for most of us in our daily lives: pressure, internal conflict, frustration, and change (adapted from Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012).

PRESSURE We have all experienced pressure at one time or another. Pressure can be in the form of expectations or demands on the way we behave. There can be the **pressure to perform** as with sales quotas at work, grades in an academic setting, or in giving a musical performance. **Pressure to conform** may come from parents who have certain standards and ideals, or from our peers in regards to dress and behavior.

Although we tend to believe that pressure is usually imposed from outside, often the pressure that we feel is self-imposed. When we internalize other people's expectations it can surface later in our own demands that we place on ourselves. Many people think that if they can just accomplish a certain goal, level of proficiency, or educational degree they will be relieved of the pressure. Unfortunately, many people continue to feel pressured to climb the corporate ladder after school and try to beat the rat race by being the best at everything.

The good news is that by acknowledging that stress may be created by having unrealistic expectations, we can begin to realize that we have more control over stress than we previously thought. You can become aware of self-imposed stress and begin to reevaluate what you really want to accomplish in life.

INTERNAL CONFLICT There are a number of ways in which having an internal dialogue about a difficult decision can produce stress. We have all had the experience of wanting two different things at the same time. According to a classic study done by Kurt Lewin (1935), there are three different types of internal conflict: **approach-approach**, **avoidance-avoidance**, and **approach-avoidance**. *Approach-approach* involves having to choose between two desirable alternatives. For example, do I want to go to a movie or do I want to go to a concert? Internal conflict resulting from having to choose between two undesirable alternatives is *avoidance-avoidance*: Do you want to live with a toothache or go to the dentist? Do you want to clean the house or live where it's dirty? The answer is easy—neither! This is reflected in the old adage about being caught between a rock and a hard place.

Approach-avoidance conflicts occur when something that you might do contains both positive and negative characteristics. For example, you want to go back to school, but you don't want the work involved. Or, you want to shoot hoops, but that means you won't be able to study for the test. Anytime there is risk involved in taking a course of action—even if it has attractive qualities—you will usually find yourself vacillating, and that can produce stress.

FRUSTRATION Frustration occurs anytime there is a situation in which the pursuit of a goal is thwarted. We all get frustrated when we want something and can't have it. Anyone who has been a parent has witnessed how easily children can become frustrated. Being out of their favorite cereal or not finding a particular toy can cause a major breakdown. Some adults don't seem to be much different. Traffic jams and long commutes can be frustrating, but some people become aggressive and give in to various forms of road rage because they can't get where they want to go.

Not all frustration needs to lead to aggression, though. It is useful to remember that most frustrations are brief and are often over insignificant things. And, by controlling your moods you may prevent yourself from doing something that only makes the situation worse . . . and could lead to even greater frustration.

CHANGE There are numerous demarcations on the road of life that indicate the need to make a change. Life changes can be both negative and positive, but anything that requires noticeable alteration or adjustment to your living situation may cause stress. Why would positive events produce stress? Because even positive change disrupts daily routines.

According to Holms and Rahe (1967), changes in work, relationships, or finances can be stressful even when the changes are welcomed. Based on this theory, they developed the *Social Readjustment Rating Scale* (SRRS) to measure life changes as a form of stress. The scale assigns numerical values to 43 major life events that are supposed to reflect the magnitude of readjustment of each change. (For example, death of a spouse is 100, marriage is 50,

foreclosure of a loan is 30, moving is 20, and going on vacation is 13.) In responding to the scale, respondents are asked to indicate how many of the changes listed they have experienced in the last year. The sum is an index of the amount of change-related stress that the person has experienced. (If you'd like to evaluate your level of stress, a website is provided at the end of this chapter.)

Other experts have argued that the scale doesn't measure change exclusively because many of the events listed on the scale are predominately negative or undesirable. It could be that frustration from the negative events rather than change itself is what creates most of the stress assessed by the scale. To investigate this possibility, Turner and Wheaton (1995) devised ways to take into account the desirability or undesirability of life changes. The findings in this study indicate that life change is *not* the crucial dimension measured by the SRRS, and the undesirable or negative life events cause much of the stress tapped by the scale.

But, as usual, there are other researchers who support the hypothesis that changes are stressful independent of the desirability of the change. It would appear that even though there is a general consensus that change can be difficult for some, it is not inherently or inevitably stressful. As is often the case, psychologists suggest that more research needs to be done in this area.

Responses to Stress

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES/STOP AT THE TOP Emotional responses are a natural and normal part of dealing with the frustration of everyday life. Even unpleasant emotions can serve an important function. Similar to physical pain, emotions can be a warning that one needs to take action. But, strong emotional arousal or reactions can hinder any effort to control stress. The well-known phenomenon of test anxiety is an example of how emotional arousal can hurt performance.

But, anxiety itself isn't the culprit; it is more a matter of how much you have and how you use it. A frequent topic of research is the relationship between anxiety and performance. There is a level of stress that produces an optimal level of performance, and if stress increases beyond that point, the performance level drops (this is called the **Yerkes-Dodson law**). Most of us at some time have pushed ourselves to the point of working twice as hard but getting only half the results. This is the basis for the concept that I call "**Stop at the Top**." It means being concerned enough to put forth your best effort, while being aware that any more pressure will result in a decrease in abilities.

It is important to know when you reach or pass that point. For example, if you are sitting in your car at the stop sign, it may be beneficial to put your foot to the floor to get moving. The same behavior that helped you accelerate may create difficulties, though, if at some point you don't modify it. If you still have your foot to the floor and you

are doing 90 mph, even on the freeway you will probably be in big trouble.

One way of recognizing the point of diminishing returns is to pay attention to early warning signals that alert you that you are on overload and that it is time to back off a bit and slow down. Your body usually sends out numerous signals when you are reaching the *Stop at the Top* point: physical tension in the body, little internal voices warning of the outcome of continuing a current lifestyle, or brief mental glimpses of what might really be happening to you. Honor your body and pay attention to the signals. There is ample medical evidence about people who ignored their pain for years and paid a high price for it.

So, to *Stop at the Top*, you need to pay attention to your early warning signals and stay in the range of optimal performance.

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES Some of the pioneering research on the physiological reaction to stress related to the fight-or-flight response. If you see a threatening person or situation, your heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, respiration increases, and digestion slows down. This prepares you to flight or flee.

But in our modern world, many stressors can't be handled simply through fight-or-flight. Many problems such as work pressures, marital problems, and financial difficulties result in chronic stress rather than acute stress. Concerns about the effects of such prolonged physical arousal were first expressed by Hans Selye (1974), who observed that patients who were under prolonged psychological stress developed a similar cluster of symptoms. It did not seem to matter whether they were male or female, child or adult, physically well or ill; these patients experienced a loss of appetite, muscular weakness, and decreased interest in the rest of the world.

The **general adaptation syndrome (GAS)** is how Selye describes these common effects. The GAS consists of three stages: **alarm**, **resistance**, and **exhaustion**. In the alarm stage, the body enters a temporary state of *shock*, a time when resistance to stress is below normal. The body detects the stress and tries to eliminate it. The body loses muscle tone, temperature decreases, and blood pressure drops. Then, a rebound called *countershock* occurs, in which resistance to stress begins to pick up: the adrenal cortex enlarges and hormone release increases. After a short alarm stage, the individual enters the resistance stage, which is an all-out effort to combat stress. Hormones flood the body; blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and respiration all skyrocket, but the body can only sustain this level of internal activity for so long. If the all-out effort fails and the stress persists, the individual moves into the exhaustion stage. Now the wear and tear on the body takes its toll. The person may collapse in a state of exhaustion, and vulnerability to disease increases (Santrock, 2006).

Researchers now believe that the link between chronic stress and the onset of illness is a weakened immune system. In one study individuals undergoing

prolonged stress (i.e., greater than one month) were deliberately exposed to a virus, as was a control group of subjects who had not experienced chronic stress. The researchers found that those subjects in the "prolonged stress group" not only became infected with the virus more often than the control group of "non-stressors," but they also took longer to recover (Cohen, 1998). This same phenomenon has been observed in rats with cancer. Visintainer (1982) found that when stress is chronic, and perceived as inescapable, the mortality rate from cancer was much higher than in non-stress control groups.

BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES We've just talked about the emotional and physiological response to stress, most of which you may not have much control over. What you *do* have control over is what you do in response to stress—your behavior. What you do in response to your emotional and physiological responses is what many people call **coping**. Coping is the active behavioral actions that you take to master, reduce, or tolerate situations caused by stress. The important thing to remember is to not just sit and stew in your emotions, but to *do* something. Specific suggestions for coping will be covered later in this chapter and in Chapter 9.

STRESS AND PERSONALITY You've heard a lot about Type A and B personalities. These types highlight the important relationship between behavioral and physiological responses to stress. Some people are more prone to stress than others depending on their personality.

Type A Behavior Some people seem to create much of the stress they experience by their beliefs, self-talk, and behavior. Friedman and Rosenman (1974) studied the personality of such people, who they call Type A.

The primary characteristics of the Type A personality are (a) strong competitive orientation, (b) impatience and time urgency, and (c) anger and hostility (Scott, 2011). They are often preoccupied with productivity, achievement, and perfection. These people seem to be constantly in a hurry, and are frequently trying to do several things at a time. Typically, people with the Type A behavior pattern over-schedule activities and then become tense when they don't complete the unrealistic tasks they have set for themselves.

The difficulty in coping with this type of lifestyle seems to come into play when a great deal of suppressed or unexpressed anger is also present. Some researchers say it is the *hostility* aspect of anger that is the problem and that leads to cardiovascular disease (Eaker and others, 2004).

Type B Behavior The Type B personality is the opposite of the Type A orientation. Type Bs are not slaves of time and are not preoccupied with achievements and aggressive competition. Type B personality is marked by relatively relaxed, patient, and amicable behavior. When they work, they do so in a calm and unhurried manner. They are able to relax and

have fun without feeling guilty. They are able to play without the need to win at any cost. Transforming yourself from a Type A personality entails learning a balance in life, especially a balance between work and play. It involves changing attitudes and beliefs so that you do not react so intensely to situations and thus cause stress. Most of all, it requires that you accept full responsibility for how you are living.

Coping with Stress

INEFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES One form of coping that many college students are familiar with is procrastination. When something unpleasant, say a term paper, is looming in the near future, one way of dealing with it is to just ignore it. While the momentary relief seems beneficial, most of us know that eventually we will have to pay a price for having postponed the necessary work. And, the last minute flurry of activity creates even more stress.

Aggression is another counterproductive coping mechanism. People strike out at others when they are upset in the mistaken belief that it will help them feel better. But, kicking the car, the dog, or someone walking by will usually make things worse, not better.

Another negative consequence of stress is anxiety. While not exactly a coping mechanism, some people just allow themselves to continue to be anxious rather than deal with the source of the problem. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional response that can become all-consuming to the extent that it interferes with any attempt to develop more efficient coping strategies. Just worrying about a problem seldom solves the problem or makes you feel better.

EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Internal Strategies Whoever said “It’s not what happens to you that counts, but what you think about what happens” made an accurate statement about how we create stress. What you think in a given situation plays a large part in how you feel; what you feel affects the level of stress experienced; and the level of stress experienced influences behavior. Your behavior and its consequences then have a bearing on your thoughts. At that point, the cycle becomes self-perpetuating. One way to interrupt that cycle is to change your thought patterns. Changing what you hear and see, and even your interpretation of the situation, can change your feelings, thereby lessening the degree of stress you feel.

As an example of how thinking about a situation affects the amount of stress experienced, consider the following: Have you ever gotten totally upset over some insignificant event, yet stayed calm when a major crisis took place in your life? Did the difference in reactions have anything to do with your emotional state at the time of each event? How were your emotions affected by your thoughts before and during each of the events? A person who is thinking negative thoughts or is in a bad mood is more likely to become stressed out at one of life’s little

irritations, whereas a person facing a major problem may focus on handling the immediate needs and then talk to himself or herself about generally making things better in the future.

Now, let’s connect the idea of thought processes with the concept of *associating* and *dissociating* from the previous section in this chapter. Some people replay an unfortunate incident a hundred times in their minds, stepping into it and intensifying the feelings each time. Those feelings then influence their images of future happenings, which are usually visualized as being even worse. That kind of thinking, sometimes called *catastrophic thinking*, influences behavior and usually reduces our capacity to deal with stress head-on. This can leave us feeling immobilized, which in turn leads to a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies.

Contrast that with those who *step out* of a situation and look for what they need to learn from the situation. They observe the situation from an external perspective and act as a coach for themselves when thinking about the event. They imagine what they need to do in the future to make things better, and then step into that situation and become fully associated with the experience of doing what will correct that old event from the past. What you step into and what you step out of will make a major difference in the amount of stress in your life.

Replaying a stressful event over and over in your mind, whether it has actually happened or not, is usually counterproductive and only increases worry and anxiety. Focusing on the future and what needs to occur for things to work out better usually leads to a reduction in stress; it also empowers the person to deal with stress as it arises, rather than avoiding it. The people who are overstressed and who burn out are usually the ones who are associated while experiencing difficulty and dissociated from the solution. A better coping strategy is to dissociate from the difficult situations and then fully experience acting on the future solutions.

Resourcefulness Another way of managing stress is creating and maintaining a state of resourcefulness. This means (a) paying attention to your early warning signals so that you can *Stop at the Top* and use your energy to be productive and (b) increasing positive feelings by being associated with the desired end result or solution.

Here is an opportunity to practice. Think of a time when you noticed your early-warning signals, knew you could make a choice of which path to go down, and did the more effective thing. Now think of a time when you went down the same old road that wasn’t productive. What was the difference in those two situations? That difference can be a clue to creating the mental attitude that will help in the future.

Building on that idea, think of a time when you were feeling strong and competent. Remember all the details of what you were seeing, hearing, and feeling in that situation. What signal will trigger remembering all of that when you need it? Now remember an exciting moment when you were feeling especially alive and creative. Stack both of

those memories on top of each other and allow yourself to fully feel the experience. Do you feel some of the energy that may be useful in dealing with future situations? What will be your signal—a feeling or sensation, something you say to yourself, or a visual image—to remember what you just did? Call this your “competence cue.”

Practice applying this by imagining a time in the future when you might be under stress. Pay attention to the signal that will remind you to be how you want to be in that situation. Call up your competence cue, take the right road at the choice point, and fully experience the situation as you go through it in a manner that makes you feel satisfied with the results. Notice what you learned from that experience, and repeat the situation as often as needed to feel confident that you will remain resourceful in the future.

DEVELOPING STRESS TOLERANCE: HARDINESS Some people seem to be naturally better at dealing with a major setback in life. There are a number of **moderator variables (resiliency factors)** that seem to be involved in coping more effectively with stress:

- **Hardiness** is a disposition that is marked by commitment, challenge, and control (Kobasa, 1984). The good news is that hardiness can be learned, and it often comes from strong social support and encouragement from family and friends (Maddi, 2007).

- **Social support** refers to the various types of aid, care, and concern that people in your social network might provide. Numerous studies have indicated that social support serves as a type of protection during times of high stress, reduces the negative effects of stressful events, and has positive effects on health even when people aren’t under stress (Wills and Fegan, 2001). Recent studies suggest that providing social support to others can also have psychological benefits to oneself. Perhaps it would be wise to reach out to others and make sure that you stay in contact with friends. Nurturing relationships can have long-term benefits from mutual support during times of difficulty.
- **Optimism** is the general tendency to expect good outcomes. Some see the glass as half empty while others see the glass as half full. And, some people just go get another glass so that they can make it full! It appears that optimists not only have a more positive outlook, but they are more inclined to take action to improve their situation. Optimists cope with stress in more adaptive ways than pessimists. They are more likely to engage in action-oriented and problem-focused coping and are more willing to seek social support. Pessimists are more likely to deal with stress by giving up, avoiding it, or just engaging in denial (Prati and Pietrantonio, 2009).

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Emotions aren’t right or wrong; those judgments come from family and culture.
- More important than judging right or wrong is considering the context in which the emotion occurs and the intensity of the emotion in order to decide if your reaction is useful.
- You have more control over your emotions than you think; emotional control can be learned.
- Everyone will experience stressful periods in their lives; life is neither equitable nor fair.
- Strategies for handling stress can be learned.

Chapter Review

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Many theories attempt to explain emotions, and most include physiological and cognitive components. Research suggests that there are specific areas of the brain that are related to emotions. Feelings aren’t right or wrong, but context is important. Repressing emotions can cause problems. Limiting one’s feeling leads to limiting them all. Your feelings about feelings originate in your family. Using the “dimmer switch” to control your emotions helps if you use it at the right time.

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Knowing how to increase or decrease your feelings can be valuable. Being associated by stepping into the situation and staying in the present while describing the emotion will increase feelings.

Being dissociated by stepping out, experiencing the situation as if at another time, and making directive comments will decrease your feelings. Sometimes you can modify your moods by examining your beliefs. Many people have unrealistic expectations that predispose them to having unnecessary emotional reactions at times. Monitoring your thoughts and self-talk can be useful.

EXPERIENCING EMOTIONS

We have more control of emotions than we think. Dissociating can be useful in a context in which getting angry would be inappropriate. Coping with anger can be aided by examining your assumptions and considering what is beneath the anger. Guilt is often anger turned inward. If you have done something that you feel bad about, you might feel mad at yourself. There are

two kinds of guilt: constructive and destructive. One comes from recognizing mistakes and doing what is necessary to remedy the situation. The other is often irrational or unnecessary. There are methods for dealing with constructive guilt in a useful manner. Sometimes you must allow yourself to feel sadness, and sometimes you must let go of sadness. It helps to consider your beliefs about expressing sadness. There are gender differences in expressing sadness. Be aware of your objections to the resolution of sadness; there may be a significant reason for feeling sad.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence describes qualities such as understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others, and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Anxiety is not always negative; it depends on how much you have and how you create it. Some stress can provide motivation, if you know how to read your early warning signals and *Stop at the Top*. You can handle stress by remembering the difference between times you have handled stress well and times you haven't. Emotional and physiological responses can have long-term health consequences. It's important to cope with stress in a productive manner. Those with a Type A personality often have health problems due to stress. They might learn to adopt some of the strategies of those with a Type B personality.

Website Resources

Anger Management

<http://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control.aspx>

Emotional Intelligence Quiz

http://www.queendom.com/queendom_tests/transfer

Holmes and Rahe *Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS)*

<http://www.stresstips.com/lifeevents.htm>

Stress Management

<http://www.guidetohealthcareschools.com/tips-and-tools/stress-management>

<http://www.mentalhelpnet.com>

<http://www.stress.org>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in each chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* from the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. What was your reaction to the 10 building blocks of emotions? Which were especially meaningful for you?
2. What did you learn about how to *associate* or *dissociate* regarding your emotions? Which do you have a tendency to do, and how can you develop a more balanced approach?
3. In the section *Incoming and Outgoing Emotions*, which of the four types most describes you or those around you? Where and when will you apply this information?
4. What did you learn about emotions? What is the connection between physiology and cognition? How do emotions influence your behavior?
5. What did your family teach you about expressing anger? How can you apply the information in this chapter about handling anger in a constructive manner?
6. What are your beliefs about sadness and its expression? Some people believe that you should cry as often as you need to; how often would that be for you? Do you have a different set of standards for yourself than for other people?
7. When have you felt guilty? Was it constructive or destructive guilt? To whom do you owe an apology?
8. Where, and in what specific situations, do you think you most need to use your emotional intelligence? What was important for you about the material in that section? How will the material in that section influence how you deal with anger and sadness?
9. Under what circumstances do you most feel stress? What ideas from the chapter might you use to help control your stress?

LEARNING ABOUT INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

Part II gives you the opportunity to explore how the concepts and information you learned about yourself in Part I influence how you behave in the larger world. And how the larger world, in turn, influences how you behave with others.

*“People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered.
Love them anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
Do good anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway.
The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank anyway.
The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the
smallest men and women with the smallest minds.
Think big anyway.
People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.
Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway.
People really need help but may attack you if you do help them.
Help people anyway.
Give the world the best you have and you’ll get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you have anyway.”*

“The Paradoxical Commandments” were written by Kent M. Keith
in 1968 as part of a booklet for students.



5

FAMILY INFLUENCES

Marylee's mother committed suicide when she was fifteen. It might have been that she was destined for a terrible demise in any event, but the pressures of having five children; a frequently unemployed, drug-addicted husband with abusive tendencies; and a need to work full time to make ends meet seemed to have caught up with her. Marylee's father, who wasn't coping very well with life before, now believed that he had even more reason to dive to the bottom of the bottle. At first, it didn't seem like that much had really changed for Marylee. She had been in charge of the younger kids from early on, and her mother had increasingly counted on her for help and support over the years. Her father had always come up with various reasons for why he had to be some place other than home.

At first, after her mother's death, her father made at least some attempt at trying to provide some structure around the house. Quickly, though, he realized that Marylee was really better at running household operations and already had a number of systems in place for how things needed to get done to take care of her younger siblings.

She had mixed feelings about him as a result. She wished that he were better suited for parenting, but at the same time didn't want to have to negotiate everything about how to run the household. He became increasingly critical of her even as she took on more of the adult role. It was a strange burden that came with an overwhelming sense of responsibility but also provided the needed opportunity to be in charge of something in her chaotic life. She learned quickly how to function at a fairly high level while pretending that everything was normal.

Marylee continued to develop the ability to keep up a good front and maintain her composure almost to a fault. She desperately needed approval from others, and gained that by trying extra hard to be more than just competent. Through her need to excel, she was frequently noticed by her teachers and other adults—most of whom considered her mature beyond her years. Few knew that she really needed and wanted someone to take care of her even though she simultaneously felt that she couldn't really trust or rely on anyone else.

Her younger brother, William, insisted on being called "Bad Bill" and was determined to live up to his adopted moniker. His way of coping with the family loss was to stir up as much trouble as possible on the home front. Fortunately for everyone, he did most of his acting out at school by way of being the class clown. Within the family, his pain came out as anger, and he was willing to use almost any potential conflict as an excuse to lash out at those around him; he seemed to delight in torturing his younger siblings. While he knew better than to directly contradict his father, giving Marylee grief was his greatest pastime.

Still, all through high school, she managed to hold on and provide the strength necessary for keeping the family together. It came at great sacrifice to her personal life and she seldom had time for or participated in the usual activities of other teenagers. She longed to move out of state to go to college, but knew her father needed her at home and so she attended the local community college. And, besides, she needed to work part-time in order to help with the finances and support her younger siblings.

It wasn't until she graduated from college that she finally left home. "Bad Bill" had eventually settled into being just Bill and had developed a relationship with their father after starting to work at a company his dad had started. They even stopped off for a beer on the way home on a fairly regular basis. Marylee's younger sister, the next in line after Bill, seemed to be capable of taking over the household, and Marylee reluctantly acknowledged that perhaps she could move on without too much guilt. But things would always remain strained with her father, who felt that she had abandoned him.

For her part, though, Marylee was certain that if she ever got into a relationship, she would have to take care of herself and be the one in charge. Her life experiences hadn't given her much in the way of being able to believe that she could rely on anyone else.

Discussion From the previous story, what do you think will happen if Marylee gets married and decides to raise a family? How do you think the need to be exceptionally responsible will play out in other areas of her life? What might have been different if she had been the youngest in the family? What influenced Bill and why do you think he behaved the way he did? How do you think the father's behavior will affect Bill in the future? How would things have changed if he were the oldest?

In this chapter we will explore the influence of family dynamics. It never ceases to amaze me how people from the same family can have such disparate stories about what occurred over the course of the family life cycle. One person can tell stories of how the mother was warm, caring, and supportive, and the family was just fine, while another member believes the opposite. The same situation can happen for the father. One child has a close relationship with the father, while another swears that he was a tyrannical dictator who was never satisfied with anything he or she did.

Perhaps an explanation could be that no one really shares the same family. Each person born into the family changes the system, and with the addition or loss of a member the whole family system changes. And, each person brings his or her own unique personality, perspective, and coping abilities to the family table.

Behavior is greatly influenced by our earliest experiences with the people we are closest to. Regardless of the structure, our families continue to affect how we relate to others and the world in general—we tend to recreate our families out in the world. Therefore, it is useful to examine how families affect who we are, how we act, and what we expect from others, and explore what we can do to alter our behavior if we choose. In this chapter we'll cover family roles, including birth order, the effect of race and culture on families, how we recreate our families out in the world, effective and ineffective parenting styles, how the family is changing, and myths about families.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 5

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Describe Bowen's eight family processes that affect how we act later in life.
2. Describe typical birth order roles: first, middle, youngest, and only. What does it mean to accept or reject the birth order role?
3. Describe the impact of family roles on later life.
4. What does "the family that never was" mean? What is a more likely source of society's ills than loss of "family values"?
5. Describe the four parenting styles. Which is most effective? Why?
6. What are *helicopter parents* and *drill sergeant parents*? Why are these parenting styles ineffective?
7. What are the reasons that women stay in abusive relationships?
8. Define "chemical dependency."
9. Describe the common effects of physical abuse and substance abuse on children.
10. Describe the suggestions for coping with and recovery from substance abuse.
11. Describe the features of a skilled, functional family.
12. What is a "blended family?" and what are the three stages in building a strong blended family?
13. Describe four stepfamily myths.

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material make notes on constructs and on events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

HOW FAMILIES AFFECT WHO WE ARE

General Concepts

Dr. Murray Bowen, one of the early explorers of the powerful influence that family systems have on the behavior of individuals, hypothesized that "Human beings' perceptions of self and others are more strongly influenced by the quality

of their emotional dependency in family relationships than by any other social or environmental factor" (Bowen, 1978, p. 132). For Bowen, the submerged ebb and flow of family life, the simultaneous push and pull among family members for both distance and togetherness, is the force underlying all human behavior. Although Bowen did not invent family systems theory, he was the first to conceptualize the

family as a *natural system*, one that was more like an ant colony or beehive than most people cared to admit. It could be fully understood only in terms of the fluid but predictable processes among members. The following are eight important family processes that Bowen claimed influence how we act later in life:

1. **Differentiation of self:** People tend to define themselves according to the way their family has defined them. *Differentiation of self* is the ability to see yourself as an individual, separate from the family identity, while still being able to maintain connections with the family. An individual's differentiation of self in any social group depends on the effectiveness of that person's differentiation of self in the family.
2. **Triangles:** If the tension between parents reaches a certain level, a third person (often, a child) is predictably drawn into the emotional field of the two-some. A person who is triangulated (caught up in the problems between two others) in a family system tends to be easily caught up in the emotional interdependencies of other relationships and social groups.
3. **Nuclear family emotional system:** Emotional patterns, including ways of reacting to the world, tend to be passed down from parents to children. When tension amasses in a family system, one or more of three things can happen: marital conflict, dysfunction of a spouse, or projection to a child (as described next).
4. **Family projection process:** Parents stabilize their relationship with each other and lower the anxiety in the twosome by viewing a child as their shared problem—the black sheep. Having a black sheep defuses or redirects attention from the real problem to someone else having difficulties. If the black sheep leaves the family for any reason, someone else may pick up the black sheep role because the family system operates only when there is someone to focus on as the problem. A person who is the object of a family projection is more vulnerable to being made a scapegoat in other social settings.
5. **Emotional cut-off:** An emotional cut-off occurs when a family member decides that he or she doesn't want anything to do with the family or when a family member is rejected by the family. Cut-offs result in tension and stress for a number of reasons, including loss and the need to realign the remaining relationships.
6. **Multigenerational transmission process:** There is a strong tendency to repeat limiting patterns of emotional behavior in successive generations. Unless conscious efforts to modify these impaired patterns are made, such behavior is usually repeated automatically in the next generation. For example, in some families it is not acceptable to talk about family issues; rather, when strife occurs they simply stop talking to each other, sometimes for years. Or,

Thought Question 5.1

To what extent does your family influence how you act in situations outside the family?

in some families, screaming, fighting, and violent behavior is the norm, while in others individuals are expected to handle their own needs and not “burden” others.

7. **Sibling position:** Seniority and sex distribution among siblings in the same and related generations have a strong influence on behavior. A person who acts in accordance with others' expectations for a particular sibling position tends to repeat the same behavior patterns in other social settings.
8. **Emotional process in society:** Things that happen in the larger society influence all of the previous processes. For example, destructive political leadership may make it difficult or impossible to differentiate from the family.

Family systems theory has far-reaching implications, to the extent that social groups such as work, friendship, religious, and political systems manifest relationship characteristics similar to those of families (Hall, 1991).



“Happiness is a large, close-knit family in another city.”

George Burns

Family Roles

BIRTH ORDER There is a saying: “If you change any part of a system, you change the whole system.” This applies to families and underlines the importance of understanding birth order. For each child who joins the family, the whole family shifts and changes to a degree. The arrival of a younger sibling may cause distress to an older child accustomed to parents’ exclusive attention, but it also stirs enormous interest, presenting both children with the opportunity to learn crucial social and cognitive skills: how to comfort and empathize with another person, how to make a joke, how to resolve arguments, even how to irritate.

If two children who grew up in the same family are vastly different, and genetics accounts for only part of these differences, what else is going on? The answer may be that brothers and sisters don’t really share the same family at all. Rather, each child grows up in a unique family, each one shaped by the way he or she perceives other people and events, by the chance happenings he or she alone experiences, and by how other people—parents, siblings, and teachers—perceive and act toward him or her. In that respect, each person in a family unit may have a totally different perspective on the dynamics of the family. If you interview all the members of a family about their experience of being a part of that unit, you might get as many different responses as there are respondents. Each person may have a part of the truth, with no one really having the whole picture. Inevitably, each child will have his or her perspective influenced to some degree by the order in which he or she joined the family.

Alfred Adler (1927) was one of the first to focus attention on the possible influence of birth order. As one of the inner circle of Freud’s psychoanalytic society, he argued that the foremost human drive was not sexuality, but a striving for superiority. He believed that young children naturally feel less competent when compared to older siblings or adults. These early inferiority feelings supposedly motivate individuals to acquire new skills and develop talents. We all have some degree of feelings of inferiority, and therefore learn to compensate. The particular form of

“Children despise their parents until age forty, when they suddenly become just like them—thus preserving the system.”

Onetin Crewe

compensation a person takes and the skills that are developed are related, in part, to the position one occupies in the family.

For awhile, in the 1980s, prominent scholars argued that the impact of birth order on behavior was overrated because classifying people by birth order was too simplistic. A family is an incredibly complex and dynamic system with so many factors influencing behavior that untangling them would be difficult, at best. And yet, considerable anecdotal evidence persists in declaring that there are common traits for certain birth positions. More recent studies may indicate that the interest in the connection between birth order and behavior is again increasing. For example, in a *Scientific American* article from January 2010, Joshua Hartshorne reviews studies that indicate that family position seems to affect intelligence and personality (Hartshorne, 2010).

In an older study, Lawrence Lyman (1995) from the Department of Psychology at the City College of New York, asked subjects to list three words that described the characteristics of each birth position. Then subjects were instructed to rate each descriptive word in terms of positive or negative connotation on a scale ranging from most negative (15) to most positive (15). It seems that participants held a shared image of the negative and positive qualities of each birth position regardless of their own birth position.

Frank Sulloway, a science historian at MIT, suggests (Sulloway, 1996) that *people with the same birth rank have more in common with each other than they do with their own siblings*. He reanalyzed previous studies (which included nearly 121,000 participants), and found that birth order does, indeed, relate to personality. Sulloway then examined scientists throughout history, and asked whether birth order affected which scientists had been most willing to challenge established opinions. There was a clear pattern when he examined 28 scientific controversies over the past 400 years. Those scientists who were *least* likely to accept new theories were firstborns with younger siblings. Later-borns were five times more likely than firstborns to support new theories, such as the earth going around the sun (Copernicus) and evolution (Darwin).

Sulloway proposes that firstborn children identify more readily with parental authority in part because they are often put in charge of younger siblings. Through this identification, firstborns adopt the norms and values of their parents, and society, in ways that subsequent children do not. The oldest is the first in line and is born to be boss. In the world of the family, sibling rivalry is a case of dog-eat-dog, and the oldest seldom goes to bed hungry. In contrast, later-born children are born to rebel. They seem to believe that if you can’t beat ‘em, don’t join ‘em. Therefore, later-born siblings often excel by choosing different paths.

This isn’t to say that birth order is all that counts, for there are always exceptions. Sulloway devotes much of his book to showing ways in which different influences,

such as gender and conflict with a parent, interact with birth order. For example, conflict with a parent may offset a firstborn's conformist ways. Once estranged from the status quo and relegated to the underdog role, a firstborn can readily become more rebellious. Some of these additional influences will be presented below.

Birth Order Roles Birth order is typically described in terms of oldest, middle, youngest, and only child. As an introduction to the influence of birth order roles, see if you find any pattern in the following illustrations:

Remember back in high school when you went out cruising on Friday night? One person in the car always wanted to hang bare-ended out the side window, throw bottles, or do something else disruptive. Another person usually tried to keep everybody together and out of jail: "Sit down, we're not doing anything weird; we're going to the dance, and we're not going to get drunk." Then there was the person who said, "I don't care what we do, just as long as I get to come along."

At work, some people always tell everyone else what to do, how to do it, and when to do it, even though doing so is not their responsibility. Others channel their creative energy into avoiding actual work by hiding out in the bathroom, texting or calling friends, checking Facebook, or taking lots of coffee breaks. And then there are the ones just standing around waiting to be told exactly what to do.

Consider a woman, the oldest of 10 kids, who has been in charge of unruly siblings since she was 12 years old. Do you think she marries someone who is going to tell her what to do? Fat chance! She goes out and finds a man who is the youngest of eight kids and had seven mother figures who fed him, dressed him, and told him what, where, and how to do everything while he was growing up. This guy wanders around the world saying, "What do I do now?" until along comes this woman who tells him, "Come here, do this, sit here, eat this."

Is a pattern beginning to emerge that tells us something about families and birth order? People accustomed to certain family roles often go out in the world and re-create that same setup. It is a way of going back to the familiarity of the role they had when growing up. Just as the role may have been adopted in an unconscious manner, so too is the influence on behavior as an adult often unconscious.

Just as Sulloway found when studying scientists, the **oldest child** is most likely to be the protector of the family system, carrying on the standards of the family. He or she is more responsible because he or she often has more responsibilities. The oldest gets a certain amount of attention just for being the oldest. Oldest children tend to be steady, dependable, and conscientious because that's what gets them attention and approval. They get along well with authority figures. They are often high achievers who are concerned with their own prestige. The oldest also experiences considerable pressure from the expectations of parents. The firstborn is often the guinea pig for ner-

vous new moms and dads. Some firstborns feel that they have to please others and tend to be perfectionists. Oldest children, having been only children for some period of time, want to stay in first place. They may feel dethroned when a sibling is born. They may seek undue attention, which can be constructive if they channel that energy into positive accomplishments, or destructive if they don't feel they have received the attention they deserve.

The **middle child** is more likely to stir things up, challenge authority, and question the family system. Middle children tend to elbow their way through life. Middle children are usually creative about getting attention because they are in competition with the oldest and the youngest, who get attention simply by being in their respective roles. Depending on the level of conflict in the family, to get attention, middle children may assume the role of the social coordinator or mediator for the family. They are the ones who are lively and entertaining, jokers or clowns; they keep things moving in the family. Middle children might also feel unloved and squeezed out. They may believe that adults are unfair and struggle against that unfairness. If they become discouraged in their ability to get attention for positive behavior, a middle child can become the problem child in the family. Middle children are often rebels.

The **youngest child**, like the oldest, doesn't have to do a lot to get a certain amount of attention—it's there, it's guaranteed. All the baby has to do is look cute, burp, drool, or whatever, and the world says, "Isn't that wonderful? Look at that; isn't he cute?" Parents usually have completely different expectations for the youngest than for the oldest. Parents may be more affluent during the years that the youngest is growing up, so they may have a tendency to spoil the youngest.

Additionally, the youngest child, like the only child, is never displaced by a newborn. They have a special spot and may get a lot of attention because others in the family feel a sense of responsibility for them. They are often indulged, but that doesn't mean that they are always spoiled in a negative way. They just learn to expect good things from life, so they usually end up being great optimists. Youngest children who have been treated well are usually sociable, easygoing, and popular. If they were treated unkindly or teased, they may be shy and irritable with others (Richardson, 2000).

Youngest children have siblings to serve as models for what to do and what not to do. They also have the opportunity to find out what they can get away with. On the other hand, they may not be taken seriously because of their size and may lack self-confidence and seek to have others do things for them. They may retain childish behavior into adulthood.

Depending on the orientation of the parents, **only children** may adapt to the youngest *or* oldest role. Some people who are only children report being treated just like junior adults from the time they were born. Some parents with one child expect the child to fit into the adult world and emulate their behavior. The child may grow up having

the choice of either playing alone or learning to interact with adults. If that is a positive experience, the only child may become quite precocious. The other possibility is that the only child may be overprotected and pampered. Because they have no rivals, they may become the center of their parents' interest. Some people in that position report having been focused on with such intense energy that they were limited in their ability to learn to do things for themselves.

Children with no siblings may feel incompetent because they are always around more competent adults, yet may feel more comfortable around adults than with their peers. These children have less opportunity to learn how to share and settle disputes. They also tend to be creative and have better relations with peers as adults than they did as children.

In large families with six or more kids, sometimes two or three band together to fill each role. In a family of eight, it may take a deputy to help the oldest maintain order. Or, the youngest three may band together for mutual protection. Another option in large families is to split each role. For example, one sibling may take the oldest role inside the family but another might be the responsible one outside the family.

As an illustration of birth order and roles, a friend of mine has three daughters. The oldest, at age 11, would walk into the room at a gathering, pull up a chair, sit down with the adults, and join in the conversation. This oldest kid was mature beyond her years and wanted to be part of the adult group. When we tried to gently say, "Hey, you're a kid. Go be one. Get out of here and go play," she felt hurt. The middle kid, by contrast, would run in and say, "Hey, I'm doing gymnastics—want to see?" She would start doing flips down the middle of the living room floor while we said, "Wait! Would you please do that outside?" She would then run outside, find out where everyone was sitting, and yell in through the big picture window, "Hey, look!" and start doing more flips and handstands out in the yard. The youngest, the baby, just came up and grabbed your leg, wrapped herself around it, and stood on your foot so that everywhere you went you carried her with you on your leg. She was wonderfully adept at being cute and adorable; she drooled and looked at you as if to say,



"I wanna sit with you." She got loads of attention for being a sweet, nice little kid.

Buying or Rejecting the Role These descriptions may hold true in many families, but certainly not all. Remember the 90 percent rule: There are exceptions to everything in discussing human behavior. Although we are born into a particular position, we may or may not assume the role. This is called buying or rejecting the role. For example, although the oldest child usually has the "second lieutenant" role and quite often is in charge of maintaining the family system, an oldest may decide (unconsciously) that there is too much pressure, too many expectations, too much responsibility. Some parents are so tough on their first kid, determined that this one will be perfect, that the child says, "I don't think I can hack being the leader and role model. I don't want it, so I'm rejecting it." That's why some oldest children seem to go in the opposite direction and act more like a middle, rebellious child or a childish youngest child.

The same process can happen with middle children. Because this is the in-between role, middle kids can be unsure which direction to go in. Should they be more like the oldest or the youngest? They can be very outgoing if they buy the role. If they decide that there isn't enough attention in the family, they may rebel and act out the black sheep role, perhaps even electing to live at someone else's house, join the Hells Angels, or do something else outrageous to get attention. Or, they might go in the opposite direction and become very withdrawn, staying in their room for two or three years because they aren't sure how or whether they fit in. They don't know if they want to fill the middle child role, but the other roles are taken, so they don't know what to do. They may feel left out, as though there is no room for them.

The same is true with the youngest. The "brat's" role also has its good and bad aspects. Some people who were the youngest of several kids may go out into the world and say, "I've never had to think for myself. I was treated like a little toy, carried around, dressed, and fed. They told me what to do, where to stand, and where to sit. I had four mothers growing up. Why should I make a decision?" These people continue that role as adults. Sometimes, though, they seem to be the opposite; if they rejected the role, they act more like an oldest child than a youngest child. They've decided, "That's it. I'm tired of people telling me what to do. I've had someone spoon-feeding me my entire life, and as soon as I get out of here, I'm going to take care of myself."

In these descriptions, notice that the birth order role influences the person's behavior whether he or she buys the role or not.

Roles Exist Independently Another thing that can happen is that if a role isn't being held down by one sibling, there may be a shifting of roles amongst the others. For example, if the oldest rejects her role someone else in the family

might move in and fill it. The middle child may say, “Well, I think I’ll take over that turf. That seems like a good way to get attention.” If that leaves the middle-child role empty, the youngest may move up to fill that one. The specific people may shift around, but the roles tend to exist regardless of who fills them.

My personal family experience serves as an example. My older brother and I were close in age, about 18 months apart. Then there was an eight-year gap between me and my younger brother and sister. For eight years, my older brother got certain things for being the oldest, and I got certain things for being the youngest, and it worked out fair and even (in our children’s minds).

Then a new youngest came along, and suddenly I was a middle child, and I started looking around for turf. This was the beginning of the attention war. Each of my brothers seemed to have a position that got them certain benefits. I remember one day when my older brother got a BB gun, and immediately I wanted one just like it. I was told I wasn’t old enough or responsible enough. A few hours later, my younger brother came home with a new Roy Rogers lunchbox, and suddenly I wanted one of those, too. I didn’t even have to be told that I was a little old for that. Should I try to act more mature, or should I try to regress? I didn’t know which direction I should go in order to regain my lost attention. When I started acting a little more like my older brother, I think he felt a lot of pressure because I was looking around for a new role to fill and I might choose his. No longer “fair and even.” Let the sibling rivalry begin.

A final example of shifting roles is what happens when the oldest gets married, gets a job, and moves out. If a role is vacated, usually there is someone else in the family who will straighten up and get his or her act together to assume the role of the oldest. So, over the course of time, children may try new ways to get attention by rotating through different roles. More than likely, though, there will be one role that has been your primary influence.

Gender Influence on Roles Fair or not, in our society we have some culturally conditioned gender beliefs that affect the role you play. If you were the only female in an all-male family, most likely you were treated as the baby. You represented the “rose among the thorns.” The only girl in the family gets to be special because she’s the only one wearing dresses. She gets all sorts of new things as opposed to hand-me-downs, because there is no one she has to share with.

If you were the only male in an all-female family, you may have been treated as the oldest regardless of your birth order position. Dad may have said, “This is my son and he is going to be the second lieutenant.” In a number of cultures, the male is groomed for a particular role regardless of birth order.

IMPACT OF FAMILY ROLE IN LATER LIFE As noted several times previously in this chapter, the role we had in our

family influences our behavior as adults—career choices, who we choose as a mate, and the way we parent our own children.

Career and Job Choices The role that you played most in your family may influence your choice of career. If they bought the role, oldest children usually feel more comfortable in a structured setting. They might like to work for a company in a management position where they can either be the second lieutenant or work for one. The firstborns of this country are disproportionately represented in *Who’s Who of America*. Apparently, 90 percent of all astronauts are firstborn (Hartshorne, 2010).

Middle children will probably find work that allows a great deal of freedom and provides an outlet for their creativity. They might be entrepreneurs. The oldest may become rich and powerful through conventional means, but it will probably be the middle kid who invents a killer software application and makes a fortune.

The youngest child may work well in sales or personnel, where they can rely on their charm and winning ways. They may even make good politicians, as they are good at attracting attention and “selling” themselves. Depending on their particular family, some youngest may feel comfortable with the structure in the workplace. Or, if they rejected their role, they might go in the opposite direction by starting their own company so that no one will tell them what to do.

Relationships Anytime a group of people get together, there are interactional patterns that are reminiscent of sibling relationships; family dynamics as well as personality types spring into action.

In marriages, an oldest will probably look for a middle or youngest. Why? When two oldest marry, sparks fly over who rules the roost. If cooperation existed among the siblings in the original family, the oldest may look for a youngest to marry. However, if there was conflict in the family, he or she may marry a rebellious middle child to re-create the old familiar scene.

Depending on whether they bought or rejected the role, youngest children may look for a person who will guide them or choose a partner they can dominate. Sometimes, a person will swing back and forth between wanting to be cared for and wanting to be in charge if his or her needs weren’t met in the family of origin. This situation can be frustrating for the spouse, to say the least.

Parenting The oldest is likely to be a much different parent than the youngest of the family. The oldest is likely to be more authoritarian. The youngest is more apt to adopt the “let’s be peers” parenting style because of never being in charge while growing up. Middle kids may have a tendency to have a laissez-faire attitude toward parenting; They may set guidelines but will be likely to foster independence.

LIMITS OF BIRTH ORDER INFLUENCE Remember the 90 percent rule when it comes to birth order. Birth order is just one of many influences that come to bear in shaping a child's personality. Here are some other key factors (Needleman, accessed April 16, 2011):

1. Parents' age and station in life at the time the child is born: A first child born to an unwed teen mother, for example, may have a very different experience growing up than does the next child, born when the mother has completed her schooling and perhaps has married.

2. Parent and child temperament or behavioral styles: Famous research by child psychiatrists Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas (1996) has shown that a child's psychological well-being depends on the appropriateness of the fit between the child's temperament and the parents'. For example, children who are very active do well with parents who themselves have a lot of physical energy; paired with parents who are more sedate, the same children are more likely to develop behavioral and perhaps emotional problems.

3. Sibling sexes: A youngest boy with four older sisters has a different family position than a youngest boy with four older brothers. A boy who falls in the middle of two sisters may have a different experience than a girl in the middle of two brothers, particularly if the parents harbor sexist views of the relative importance of boys and girls.

4. Parents' personality (which itself is likely to have been influenced by birth order): Parents who were firstborns and grew up following the rules and succeeding often impose similar expectations on their children—particularly their firstborns. If their firstborns are inclined by temperament to be persistent and self-directed (some might put this less kindly and call it “stubborn”), the family may be in for many years of discord.

Of course, there are many other factors that play important roles in the formation of a child's personality. To name just a few: family ethnicity, economic hardship or plenty, political and cultural events in the larger world (e.g., the generation of children whose outlook on life was shaped by the Vietnam War or the Cold War), losses of important people, emotional traumas, and so on. Factoring birth order into the mix can often help explain how some of these other variables may be operating. Birth order alone is not destiny, but it does offer a powerful lens that can help bring development into focus.

“Nobody, as long as they move about among the chaotic currents of life, is without trouble.”

C. G. Jung

Race, Culture, and the Family

EXTENDED FAMILIES Different cultural groups can value different family structures that expect different behaviors on the part of members. Around the world, especially in collectivist societies, a greater number of people may be included in the *family*. For example, Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans tend to rely on more than just the immediate family for support—they value **extended families**: one or both parents and their biological children, grandparents, other relatives, long-time friends, informal adoptions, and visiting relatives (Williams, Sawyer, and Wahlstrom, 2005). Among extended family members there is often much communication, visiting, sharing, and closeness. They tend to provide social services (such as day care, foster care, and caring for ill or elderly family members) for each other rather than relying on outside agencies.

In such families self-identity is likely to take second place to the family. For example, a person in an extended family might be expected to turn to family first for emotional support, guidance, or money. Because of the patriarchal nature of some cultures that value extended families, relatives on the father's side of the family may be considered more important than those on the mother's side.

In Native American groups, extended families are sometimes described as **clans**. A clan consists of a group of families or households that traces its descent through the head of the house from a common ancestor. Many clans trace their ancestry through women rather than men—they are **matrilineal**. The basic family unit is a woman, her siblings, her children, and maternal ancestors. Men play expected roles in their female blood relatives' clan (sisters, mother, maternal grandmother, and aunts) as well as in their wife's. In these clans, the female has traditionally been responsible for the duties necessary to preserve the “social organization.” Unlike the dominant culture of the United States, which emphasizes youth, Native American culture values and respects the wisdom and experience of age (Locke, 1998).

Because many people interact with each other in extended families, various cultures have developed strict guidelines regarding how various roles should interact with each other. An individual might have specific duties and responsibilities to aunts, cousins, and godparents, and expect various types of help in return. These rights and responsibilities vary depending on age, sex, and marital status.

COLLECTIVIST CULTURES Another example of how culture can affect the roles people play in families comes from societies in which the family as a group is more important than any individual in the group. For example, Japanese American families tend to value respect for authority and elders, and value allegiance to the family more than individualism and self-reliance. Family members must avoid bringing disgrace to the family name, and focusing on

self-fulfillment would be to display attributes of selfishness and exaggerated self-importance. Rather, fulfillment comes from honoring the family. Love and affection between a parent and child is combined with a strong sense of reciprocal obligation and dependence.

Obviously, family roles can be vastly different in different cultural groups and can affect behavior throughout life much as birth order does. That's why it's hard sometimes to get along with people from other cultural groups—you don't share common understandings about how people "ought" to act.

Status of the Family

The 2010 Census reveals that Americans' living arrangements are increasingly diverse. As reported in Chapter 1, the 2010 Census shows that the nation's population grew to 309 million, up 10 percent from 2000. That's an increase of 28 million people. One-third of that growth was due to net immigration, while two-thirds was due to natural increase (births minus deaths). Though some may be tired of hearing about the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964), they are creating yet another demographic "tsunami" as they approach the age of 65. Over the last decade, the number of people in the age group between 60 and 64 years grew by 55 percent—that's a gain of nearly six million people. This group has been called the "sandwich" generation because they are increasingly called upon to help support their adult children and grandchildren while also caring for elderly parents. This will have a definite impact on family dynamics, especially if there are multiple generations of people living together who have different ideas about parenting.

The 2010 Census also shows changing living arrangements, formally known as "household composition." Married couples with children under the age of 18 now represent only 22 percent of American households. Twenty-seven percent of households are empty-nest married couples, people live alone in 28 percent of households (up from 13 percent in 1960), 12 percent of households have single parents (primarily female-headed though some are male-headed), and 11 percent live in other places (nursing homes, detention centers, etc.). The average household size declined to 2.59 people, down from 2.62 in 2000. This is partly because of the increase in one-person households.

The number of multifamily households jumped 11.7 percent from 2008 to 2010, reaching 15.5 million, or 13.2 percent of all households. This is the highest proportion since at least 1968, accounting for 54 million people. Even that figure, however, is undoubtedly an underestimate of the phenomenon social service providers dub "doubling up," which ballooned during the 2008–2010 recession and less-than-robust recovery.

It is likely an underestimate because the census' multifamily household figures do not include living situations such as a single brother and single sister moving in together, or a childless adult living with his or her parents.

For many people, such arrangements represent their last best option, the only way to stave off entering a homeless shelter or sleeping in their cars. In fact, nearly half of the people in shelters in 2009 who had not previously been homeless had been staying with family members or friends (Michael Luo, New York Times News Service, December 29, 2010).

Other highlights of the 2010 Census related to family composition (Census Bureau, accessed April 24, 2011) include:

- The percentage of children under 18 with two married parents declined to 66 percent, down from 69 percent in 2000.
- The number of stay-at-home mothers remained about the same: from 24 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2010.
- The percentage of children under 18 who lived in a household that included a grandparent increased from 8 percent in 2001 to 10 percent in 2010. Of the 7.5 million children who lived with a grandparent in 2010, 22 percent did not have a parent present in the household.

So what does the future hold for the family unit? Based on current trends, it is likely we can expect the following:

- Couples will be faced with pursuing careers in different geographic locations, and commuter marriages with people working in different regions will grow.
- Society will become more accepting of childless marriages.
- While the rate has been declining recently, nearly half of all marriages will continue to end in divorce.
- More workers will demand family leave to care for newborns and newly adopted children, as well as elderly and ill family members.
- The declining fertility rate combined with increased life expectancy means that the typical married couple will have more parents than children. Therefore, most people can expect to spend more years caring for an aging parent than for dependent children.
- The majority of children will continue to be reared in "nontraditional" families. This will include single-parent and stepparent families, families led by grandparents, lesbians and gays, or single women who have adopted a child or been artificially inseminated.

We seem to be redefining the term *family*. Family Service America, a network of 300 counseling agencies and educational programs, recently revamped its definition to go beyond blood ties, reflecting how varied households have become. They define family in terms of function, not form. A well-functioning family, they say, provides emotional, physical, and mutual aid to its members. Such a family is intense, intimate, and committed. A number of different surveys and research sources indicate that family is still the deepest single

source of satisfaction and meaning in life—it's just that what constitutes a "family" is changing.

To illustrate the ongoing importance of "family," I saw a program on PBS about violence and teenage gangs. A teenager was being interviewed about his reasons for joining a gang, a decision that seemed to be dangerous given the incidence of violence among gang members. At one point in the program, the person being interviewed looked right into the camera and said, "They are my family. The gang is the only ones that watch out for me. We take care of each other." This was an interesting comment on the risks the person was willing to take to be a part of the group. It appears that there is a strong need for a feeling of belonging to a group that one considers family.

Whatever form the family takes in the next few decades, we all will continue to be greatly influenced by the family system in which we grew up. The specific nature of this influence on the next generation remains to be seen.

THE FAMILY THAT NEVER WAS In *The Way We Never Were* (1992), Stephanie Coontz examined the last two centuries of family life. In her assessment of the last half of the 20th century, she states that the *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave It to Beaver* households may never have really existed; many of the television programs of the 1950s were nothing more than advertisements for the way people wished they could be. The media projected fragments of the white middle-class dream onto the general public.

Coontz countered the notion that all of America's social ills stem from abandonment of "traditional" family forms, because this traditional form never really existed. She suggested that today's family dilemmas are not due to loss of "traditional family values," but are really due to financial inequality and the crisis of caregiving. Simply encouraging everyone to get married is not going to address the challenges that people face.

Coontz argued that stability in the family of the 1950s was due to economic and political support rather than family practices. Loans, financial aid, and the G.I. Bill all contributed to the stability of the family. Knowing that there was no golden age of family life could help politicians to deal more effectively with today's problems rather than romanticizing the "good old days." Coontz provides evidence that social and economic inequality have contributed to various problems that have had a detrimental effect on the quality of family and community life. She finds hope for the families of today, though, when problems are viewed as one symptom of a larger societal predicament. Although she may tend to focus on economics as the root problem, this is in some ways encouraging, for it means that people have not suddenly and inexplicably "gone bad." They are struggling with serious dilemmas, and although many people make poor choices or don't live up to their highest ideals, they are generally trying to do their best (Coontz, 1992).

Coontz also counters a number of other present-day beliefs about our problems and their sources. For example, some people have a tendency to unfairly blame the latest spate of violent events in our society on divorce, poor parenting, or lack of parental attention. In reality, the United States has had the highest homicide rate in the industrial world for almost 150 years, long before the supposed demise of the traditional family. She notes that drug abuse was more widespread at the end of the 1890s than at the end of the 1990s, and that the rate of alcohol consumption was almost three times higher in the 19th century than it is now.

Pessimists claim that current trends and alternative lifestyles indicate the collapse of the family system. Optimists believe that we are merely diversifying and creating new types of families. In either case, there has been an idealization of a past that may never have occurred. To say that no easy answers are to be found in the past is not to close off further discussion of family problems but to open it up. To find effective answers to the dilemmas facing modern families, we must reject attempts to recapture family traditions that either never existed or existed in a totally different context. Only when we have a realistic idea of how families have and have not worked in the past can we make informed decisions about how to support families in the present or improve their future prospects (Coontz, 1992, 1997).

In response to the considerable historical information in *The Way We Never Were*, Coontz had numerous requests to appear on radio and television, and her work was quoted frequently in magazines. People wanted to know more about where to go from here. To that end, Coontz followed up with *The Way We Really Are* in 1997. She reiterated that "there never was a golden age of family life, a time when all families were capable of meeting the needs of their members and protecting them from poverty, violence, or sexual exploitation" (p. 57). And, she attempted to offer more concrete suggestions about what would be useful in strengthening American families.

Some of her suggestions that would help families, and society in general, include (a) affordable child care, (b) a tax allowance for children that keeps up with inflation, (c) family friendly work policies that include family leave, (d) job training, (e) stiffer child support enforcement, and (f) a national health care program (Coontz, 1997).

Many of these suggestions are for programs that prevent problems from happening to begin with, but she also provides ideas for helping families and children who are already in trouble. The first factor in assisting families that are in trouble is to provide another chance to succeed at something that a person has failed at in the past. This could mean receiving education and training, an opportunity to correct a wrong rather than just being punished, or concrete aid with the chance to reciprocate. The second factor, strongly supported by developmental psychology, is having just one caring person outside the family willing to get involved in a person's life.

Thought Question 5.2

How has the information on families affected you? What do you believe are the implications for your future? How have changes in the family system influenced your behavior?

The problem with the campaign to restore the traditional family is that it keeps people focused on grieving for the past rather than looking for new possibilities in the present. It is also time to plan more effectively for the future. We need to do more of what does work and less of what doesn't. While supporting the programs that increase self-reliance for families, we need to curtail red tape and stop fragmenting services, overloading caseworkers, and hiring bureaucrats or consultants rather than people who will pitch in and really help.

PARENTING

Volumes have been written on various aspects of parenting, and it is not in the scope of this book to cover everything. What can be offered are (a) current thinking about parenting styles, including which seem to be more and less effective, and (b) some pointers on the adoption of attitudes necessary for becoming a better parent at any stage of the game. A particularly useful introduction to the complexity of parenting in America is from the Cline-Fay Institute. The following excerpt from the introduction to *Parenting with Love and Logic* (Cline and Fay, 1990, p. 12) explains their approach. While the book was written over 20 years ago, it appears that the information is still useful given that it was SheKnows 2010 Parents' Choice Award Winner: 2nd place.

*“Men stumble over the truth from time to time,
but most pick themselves up and burry off as if
nothing happened.”*

Sir Winston Churchill

Ours may be the first generation of parents who cannot even ponder parenting the way our parents did, and be successful at it. For hundreds of years, rookie parents learned the fine points of child-rearing by example; they took the techniques their parents had used on them and applied them to their children.

Today, this approach is more apt to bomb than to boom. Many of us, when we meet failure, throw up our hands in frustration and say, “I can't understand it. It worked for my dad!” Yes, it did. But things have changed. The human rights revolution, the communication explosion, changes in the family—these, and many other factors, have radically changed how our children view life. Kids . . . need to learn sooner how to cope with the tremendous challenges and pressures of contemporary life. . . .

Effective parents must learn to use different techniques with kids who live in today's complex, rapidly changing world. That's where parenting with love and logic comes in. Why the terms *love* and *logic*? Effective parenting centers around love: love that is not permissive, love that doesn't tolerate disrespect, but also love that is powerful enough to allow kids to make mistakes and permit them to live with the consequences of those mistakes. The logic is centered in the consequences themselves. Most mistakes do have logical consequences. And those consequences, when accompanied by empathy—our compassionate understanding of the child's disappointment, frustration, and pain—hit home with mind-changing power. It's never too late to begin parenting with love and logic.

Parenting with love and logic is not a foolproof system that works every time. In fact, it is not a comprehensive system at all. Our approach is more an attitude that, when carried out in the context of a healthy, loving relationship with our children, will allow them to grow in maturity as they grow in years. It will teach them to think, to decide, and to live with their decisions. In short, it will teach them responsibility, and that's what parenting is all about. If we can teach our kids responsibility, we've accomplished a great share of our parental task.

Parenting Styles

As introduced previously, parents and family dynamics greatly influence how we act and feel about ourselves throughout life. One set of constructs that seems to do a good job of describing parental behavior and the effects on children in later life is called **parenting style** (Baumrind, 1991; Cline and Fay, 1990; Darling, 1999; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Darling (1999, p. 1) notes that “parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors that work individually and together to influence child outcomes. Although specific parenting behaviors, such as spanking or reading aloud, may influence child development, looking at any specific behavior in isolation may be misleading.” Many writers have noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child

well-being than is the broad pattern of parenting. It's these broad patterns of practices that are called parenting style. This section defines parenting style, explores four types, and discusses the consequences for children subjected to the different styles. I also look at more extreme versions of these styles that can lead to problems for children.

Parenting style crosses two dimensions of parenting: **parental responsiveness** and **parental demandingness** (Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Parental responsiveness is the type and amount of warmth and support parents give their children. Parental demandingness refers to the type and number of demands parents put on their children. It includes discipline. Crossing parental demandingness and responsiveness creates four parenting styles: indulgent, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved.

Remember that “parenting style” is a construct—there is no “truth in the universe” that there are four parenting styles that reflect two overall dimensions. Rather, like all constructs, Baumrind's classification system is useful to the extent that it explains behavior, predicts behavior, and helps resolve issues in families. Thus far it has proven useful, so we look at the four styles here.

INDULGENT PARENTS **Indulgent parents** (also referred to as “permissive” or “nondirective”) are higher in responsiveness than they are in demandingness. They tend to be lenient, do not require mature behavior from their children, allow children to regulate themselves, and avoid confrontation with their children.

Helicopter Parents A type of ineffective parenting that is at the extreme of being indulgent is called being a **helicopter parent**. Some parents think love means having their lives revolve around their children. They hover over and rescue their children whenever trouble arises. They're forever running lunches and permission slips and homework assignments to school; they're always pulling their children out of jams; not a day goes by when they're not protecting little junior from something—usually from a learning experience the child needs or deserves. As soon as their children send up an SOS flare, helicopter parents, who are hovering nearby, swoop in and shield the children from teachers, playmates, and other elements that appear hostile.

Helicopter parents tend to feel uncomfortable imposing consequences. When they see their children hurting, they hurt too. So they bail them out.

Such children are unequipped for the challenges of life. Their learning opportunities were stolen from them in the name of love. The irony is that helicopter parents are often viewed by others as model parents. But the real world does not run on the bail-out principle. Traffic tickets, overdue bills, irresponsible people, crippling diseases, taxes—these and other normal events of adult life usually do not disappear when a loving benefactor bails us out. Helicopter parents fail to prepare their kids to meet that kind of world.

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTS **Authoritarian parents** are very demanding and directive, but tend to be unresponsive. These parents demand obedience and want their orders to be obeyed without question. These households tend to be orderly and highly structured, with clearly stated rules.

Drill Sergeant Parents A type of ineffective parenting that is at the extreme of being authoritarian is called being a **drill sergeant parent**. They, too, love their children. They feel that the more they bark and the more they control, the better their kids will be in the long run. “These kids will be disciplined” the drill sergeant says. “They'll know how to act right.” Indeed, they are constantly told what to do.

When drill sergeant parents talk to children, their words are often filled with put-downs and I-told-you-sos. These parents are into power! If children don't do what they're told, drill sergeant parents are going to make them do it.

Kids of drill sergeant parents, when given the chance to think for themselves, often make horrendous decisions—to the complete consternation and disappointment of their parents. But it makes sense. These kids are rookies in the world of decisions. They've never had to think—the drill sergeant took care of that. The kids have been ordered around all of their lives. They are as dependent on their parents when they enter the real world as the kids of helicopter parents.

Both of these types of parents send messages to their children—all in the name of love—about what they think their kids are capable of. The message the helicopter parent sends to the child is, “You are fragile and can't make it without me.” The drill sergeant's message is, “You can't think for yourself, so I'll do it for you.”

Although both helicopter and drill sergeant parents may successfully control the children in the early years, they have thrown major obstacles into the kids' path once they hit the “puberty trail.” Helicopter children become adolescents unable to cope with outside forces, unable to think for themselves or handle their own problems. Drill sergeant kids, who did a lot of saluting when they were young, will do a lot of saluting when teenagers. But the salute is different: now it's a raised fist or a crude gesture involving the middle finger.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTS **Authoritative parents** are both demanding and responsive. Although they keep track of their children's behavior and expect a certain standard of behavior, they are also supportive. They want their children to be assertive, cooperative, and be able to make good decisions for themselves.

Consultant Parents One type of authoritative parent is the most effective—the **consultant parent**. Consultants in the business world are always available to give suggestions and offer options. They also know when to zip their lips and let their clients make the final decision. Consultant parents know how to zip their lips, too. They are willing to share alternative

solutions to problems. They are willing to describe how they would solve the problem—if it were their problem. The consultant parents say, “It’s your life. You get to decide. Good luck!” And then they zip their lip.

The hardest job in parenting is zipping the lip. That’s why we have helicopters and drill sergeants in homes. It is easier to make a racket than to keep quiet. One crucial difference between consultant parents and helicopters and drill sergeants is ownership of a problem. Helicopters and drill sergeants both claim ownership of a child’s problem. Consultant parents let the child retain ownership (as long as the child can learn the lesson at an affordable price—you don’t let kids play on the freeway so they can learn that cars are a problem).

When Johnny droops over the kitchen table of a consultant parent and announces he’s friendless, a consultant parent responds, “No friends! That’s sad for you. What are you going to do about it?” When Johnny shrugs his shoulders, Mom says, “You don’t know? That’s even sadder—having a big problem and not knowing what you’re going to do about it. I’ve watched other people with problems like that, and I could share with you some of the things they’ve tried. It might give you some ideas. If you ever want to hear what they tried, let me know—I sure hope you can work it out.” Then she zips her lip—until Johnny asks to hear what others have tried.

Allowing a child to keep ownership of a problem sends an implied message, too. That message is: “You are wise enough to make good decisions. I trust you to know how to handle this.” That implied message builds the child up instead of putting the child down.

A child who has no control over his or her life is a child who will spend nearly 100 percent of the time trying to take control of adults and manipulate the system. A child who has some control over his or her life will spend very little time trying to control adults or manipulate the system. It’s like magic!

Here are three rules for being a consultant parent (especially important for single parents who are often doing double duty) that should become easier with practice:

- Rule 1:** Take good care of yourself—take time to do activities you enjoy and give yourself a chance to get away from the children.
- Rule 2:** Provide your child with choices you can live with.
- Rule 3:** Take the appropriate action—set limits, have consequences, and then stay out of it.

Used regularly, these three simple rules can prevent power struggles and silence the racket of helicopters and drill sergeants. The consultant parent displays the same productive characteristics as those in *Parenting with Love and Logic*, described at the beginning of this chapter (Cline and Fay, 1990). (For further information, I provide the website for *The Love and Logic Institute* at the end of this chapter.)

UNINVOLVED PARENTS *Uninvolved parents* are both unresponsive and non-demanding. Like the other styles, there are extremes that result in parents ignoring or rejecting their children. In general, if it is extreme, this parenting style is associated with poor outcomes for children. Children of helicopters and drill sergeants at least get some kind of reliable attention, but children of very uninvolved parents don’t get very much consistent attention at all, and they are particularly likely to end up with social and emotional problems (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch, 1991).

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL In addition to differing on responsiveness and demandingness, parenting styles also differ in the extent to which they are characterized by psychological control (Darling, 1997). Psychological control refers to unhealthy control attempts “through use of parenting practices such as guilt induction, withdrawal of love, or shaming. One key difference between authoritarian and authoritative parenting is in the dimension of psychological control. Both authoritarian and authoritative parents place high demands on their children and expect their children to behave appropriately and obey parental rules. Authoritarian parents, however, also expect their children to accept their judgments, values, and goals without questioning. In contrast, authoritative parents are more open to give and take with their children and make greater use of explanations” (Darling, 1997, p. 2).

Consequences for Children

Darling (1997) summarizes the consequences for children subjected to the various parenting styles:

1. Children from *authoritative* families (high in both demandingness and responsiveness) tend to be more competent in general as adults than those whose parents had other styles.
2. Children “from *authoritarian* families (high in demandingness, low in responsiveness) tend to perform moderately well in school and be uninvolved in problem behavior, but they have poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression” (p. 2).
3. Children “from *indulgent* homes (high in responsiveness, low in demandingness) are more likely to be involved in problem behavior and perform less well in school, but they have higher self-esteem, better social skills, and lower levels of depression” (p. 2).
4. Children “whose parents are *uninvolved* perform most poorly in all domains” (p. 2).

In general, the authoritative/consultative style tends to be best: It results in the ability to get along productively in the world and avoid problem behavior. “Authoritative parents appear to be able to balance their conformity demands with their respect for their children’s individuality, so children from authoritative homes appear to be able to

Fifteen Traits of a Skilled Family

1. Communicates and listens.
2. Affirms and supports one another.
3. Teaches respect for others.
4. Develops a sense of trust.
5. Has a sense of play and humor.
6. Exhibits a sense of shared responsibility.
7. Teaches a sense of right and wrong.
8. Has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound.
9. Has a shared core of religious or spiritual beliefs.
10. Has a balance of interaction among members.
11. Respects the privacy of one another.
12. Values service to others.
13. Fosters family table time and conversation.
14. Shares leisure time.
15. Admits to and seeks help with problems.

Source: Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family*, 1986.

balance the external conformity and achievement demands with their need for individuation and autonomy” (Darling, 1997, p. 3). This tends to be true across cultural groups and for both sexes, although there are some variations.

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

There are those who feel that the term **dysfunctional** has become overused. What were once the secrets in the closet of the national psyche are now the latest topics for television programs. Every week a new celebrity comes forward with tales about how his or her problems are a result of his or her parents. Possibly as an outcome of having so many people relate their personal stories on various talk shows, we seem to be experiencing a reactionary swing. Some feel that perhaps it is time to explore a balanced approach to healing rather than focusing only on blame, because not all adult behavior is attributable to something that happened to the inner child while growing up. There is a saying in the mental health field that ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics) really stands for Adult Children of Anybody. This is not meant to diminish the trauma or the difficulties that come from growing up in the family of an alcoholic. Rather, it is meant to point out that we all have been affected to differing degrees by the families in which we grew up.

While it's important not to overuse the term *dysfunctional*, true abuse can happen in families. This section looks at types of abuse, effects on behavior, and ways to recover.

Abuse and Its Effects

Child abuse is defined as “Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents

an imminent risk of serious harm” (NCANDS, 2010). This source states that there are four types of maltreatment that are now recognized:

1. Neglect
2. Physical abuse
3. Psychological maltreatment
4. Sexual abuse

Recent statistics (NCANDS, 2009) state that there were about 1.5 million documented cases of abuse in the United States in 2009. Victims in the age group of birth to one year had the highest rate of victimization (20.6 per 1000 in the U.S. population) and victimization was split about equally between boys and girls. Seventy-eight percent suffered neglect, 18 percent physical abuse, 10 percent sexual abuse, and 8 percent psychological maltreatment. (This doesn't add to 100 percent because some cases involved more than a single form of abuse.) Eighty-one percent of abusers were parents, 54 percent were women, and 83 percent were between the ages of 20 and 49 years.

People who grew up in homes in which any of the above categories or combinations thereof occurred share similar characteristics: low self-esteem, poor communication skills, inability to cope with stress, poor decision-making ability, lack of trust, and apprehension about close relationships. It is important to understand the characteristics and patterns of behavior that people develop in those situations because although those characteristics and patterns had a function at one time, they may negatively affect relationships with other people in the future.

We all do the best we know how to do in a given situation, but it is valuable to continue to update our abilities in coping with life's difficulties. That is the whole point of exploring the traumas of the past: to understand what happened, to learn new methods for coping, and to change old patterns into new ones that are more useful for getting on with life.

In this section I'll look specifically at physical abuse. I'll also discuss drug and alcohol abuse because it contributes to the likelihood that all other types of abuse will happen. I'll discuss sexual abuse in Chapter 8.

PHYSICAL ABUSE The long-term effects of physical abuse include an increased tendency to act aggressively. A study of young children finds that physical abuse at home is more strongly linked to later aggressive behavior than are such factors as poverty or divorce. John Bates (1995), a psychology professor at Indiana University, stated for the Associated Press that his study of 309 children followed from age 4 until kindergarten showed that those who were physically abused by an adult at home were more likely to be aggressive or even violent in difficult social situations. As a result of living in an unpredictable setting where they were mistreated, many people grow up lacking the needed social skills to deal with life's everyday problems. This is played out in adulthood, as evidenced by the amount of domestic violence in American families.

Ten Reasons Not to Spank

The Oregon Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse lists these 10 reasons not to spank:

Spanking Teaches Children:

1. That they don't have control over their behavior, leading to a lack of inner control.
2. To rely on others for control of their behavior.
3. That hitting is acceptable; that violence is a way to channel anger or solve problems.
4. That it is OK to hit someone you love, which can perpetuate domestic violence.
5. To seek revenge; it teaches children to hate, fear, and/or avoid the punisher.

Spanking:

1. Models an imbalance of power, based on size.
2. Is not effective; the effects of spanking are immediate but usually short-term.
3. Is useless as children get older; the degree of intensity would have to increase as the child grows.
4. Tells children what not to do, but does not teach them appropriate behavior.
5. Encourages violence and frustrates the child.

Indeed, American women have far more to fear from the men they know and once loved than from any stranger on the street. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury and death to American women, causing more harm than vehicular accidents, rapes, and muggings combined. Thirty percent of all adult female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or intimate partners (Domestic Violence Resource Center, 2011). Each year, an estimated one to six million women are beaten by the men they live with (Domestic Violence Resource Center, 2011). According to the University of New Hampshire's Family Research Laboratory, 60 percent of abused wives report that the physical violence started before marriage, while they were still dating their future husbands. About 20 percent of young women experience some violence in dating relationships (Domestic Violence Resource Center, 2011).

Why don't women leave abusive relationships? The answer is a combination of complex variables that involve lack of self-esteem, beliefs about what is normal or acceptable, and physical abuse in the home while growing up. Sarah Buel (assistant law professor at the University of Texas at Austin Law School) was once the victim of an abusive spouse herself. As a leading advocate for battered women, she (and other sources listed at the end of this chapter) lists some of the problems for women who try to leave:

- **Lack of resources:** They can't support themselves or their children, particularly if they require day care.
- **Most have trouble finding a place to live:** Five women are turned away for every one who seeks shelter, and 95 percent of shelters will not accept women with children.

- **Leaving an abusive spouse doesn't necessarily bring safety:** It often triggers more serious violence.
- **Women who leave are afraid they will lose their children:** Men, who usually control the money, are often able to hire good lawyers and fight for custody of the children.

In the past, the law failed to protect battered women. Abusive men, instead of being prosecuted and jailed for committing acts of criminal violence, were either not arrested or released by disbelieving judges. That situation is being addressed nationally and, we can hope, is being rectified, as many states take a different stance and begin to adopt new laws regarding mandatory arrest, restraining order violations, and marital rape.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE A commonality between those who were physically abused and those who grew up in homes where there was alcohol or drug abuse is that both groups become overly fearful of unpredictable events in life. The child never knows when a parent might become irrational or abusive. One day, a parent might act as if nothing is wrong, and the next day he or she might be passed out on the floor. One moment the parent might be friendly and caring, and the next he or she might be screaming and violent. Children are confused about what is expected and how to please their parents in these kinds of situations.

Adult Children of Alcoholics

The following list is indicative of the extent of problems that some people face as a result of living in dysfunctional families. It can also help us understand the depth of healing that must take place in order to have better human relations:

Adult Children of Alcoholics:

1. Guess at what normal behavior is.
2. Have difficulty following a project through from beginning to end.
3. Lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth.
4. Judge themselves without mercy.
5. Have difficulty having fun.
6. Take themselves very seriously.
7. Have difficulty with intimate relationships.
8. Overreact to changes over which they have no control.
9. Constantly seek approval and affirmation.
10. Usually feel they are different from other people.
11. Are super responsible or super irresponsible.
12. Are extremely loyal, even when it is evident that the loyalty is undeserved.
13. Are impulsive. They tend to lock themselves into a course of action without giving serious consideration to alternative behaviors or possible consequences. This impulsivity leads to confusion, self-loathing, and loss of control over their environment. In addition, they spend an excessive amount of energy cleaning up the mess.

Source: Janet G. Woititz, *Adult Children of Alcoholics*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1983.

Alcoholics Anonymous refers to the following three rules that children learn while growing up in such families:

1. Don't talk.
2. Don't feel.
3. Don't trust.

Added to this, families with such problems frequently deny that any difficulty exists. Therefore, a child is seldom permitted to express his or her feelings about living in such conditions. As a result, the child learns not only to distrust his or her own experience, but also to distrust authority figures. And if children can't trust themselves or anyone else, is it any wonder that they have difficulty forming relationships and having families of their own?

Indicators of Chemical Dependency **Chemical dependency** is simply the inability to control the use of some physical substance: not being able to quit and not being able to limit how much is used. If you have a dependency problem, recognizing it can help you move toward a happier and healthier life. We are gradually beginning to realize that a person's genetic makeup may affect his or her chances of becoming dependent, and that dependency is often a physical condition that cannot be cured by willpower alone.

You might think of a chemically dependent person as someone who can't live without his or her drink or drugs; who is often drunk or stoned; who uses every day; or who is irresponsible, immoral, and weak-willed. The fact is, a person can be chemically dependent without showing such obvious signs.

Chemically dependent people often act unwisely or inappropriately while under the influence of their drug. They may act in ways that will embarrass them later, when they learn of what they have done. They may endanger their health, their lives, and the lives of others by having unsafe sex or by driving while intoxicated. They may lose their jobs or families as people around them are hurt by their actions.

Coping and Recovery

In addition to the usual birth order roles, children from troubled families add another level of complexity to their behavior: They unconsciously adopt roles that seem to help in dealing with family dynamics. Such roles represent the child's attempts at coping with difficult situations and constitute a form of defense mechanism. All of the following work to some extent at the time, but are seldom beneficial for the person later in life.

- **The Superhero:** Superheroes are the children who hope that if they try hard enough, are good enough, or take care of everyone just right, everything will turn out okay. They often appear outwardly to be strong and competent, but inside may feel inadequate, lonely, and guilty.
- **The Scapegoat:** Scapegoat children think that serving as the lightning rod for family emotions and conflict will somehow diminish the problem.

They are frequently the ones acting out the family's pain and calling attention to what others don't want to deal with.

- **The Lost Child:** Lost children hope that being invisible will lessen the pain. They withdraw, spending considerable time alone in their rooms, the backyard, or inside their heads. They may hope that by being good and quiet, they will contribute to the family's getting better.
- **The Mascot or Distractor:** Children who are mascots or distractors learn to be funny and entertaining, hoping they will interrupt the argument or prevent people from noticing the size of the problem. Their behavior is an attempt to divert attention away from the painful reality of the family system.
- **The Chief Enabler:** Enabler children try desperately to smooth things out or to get everyone to go along and not make waves. Frequently, they try to protect the chemically dependent family member at almost any cost. They spend a great deal of energy trying to cover up problems and make things right.

Dealing with the negative aspects of adopting one of these roles is part of the focus for people in recovery. It is usually at the point of some specific traumatic event when younger that people's coping patterns get "stuck." The defenses learned and used in that particular situation then frequently become the source of difficulty in adult life. For example, a person might look for others to act as the parent who denied them what was missing earlier in their lives. An aspect of recovery is learning to avoid such codependent behavior, looking for someone else to solve your problems, by developing alternative ways of meeting your own needs. It is possible to "reparent" yourself using some of the following methods:

- **Stop the internal criticism:** Treat yourself as you would treat your own children when you are acting at your best.
- **Give yourself now what you didn't get while growing up:** That could mean a wide range of things, such as a chance to play, permission to say no, respect, or an opportunity to explore more about who you are and what you like.
- **Read and gather information:** Find out about what others have been through and how they have learned to cope. Seek therapy and attend support groups to have a place to express the feelings that you weren't allowed to have or talk about.
- **Stop the denial:** Don't deny to yourself or to others what happened.
- **Apologize to your inner child:** Apologize, if it is appropriate, for not having protected the inner child in the past from abusive people, and try not to let it happen again.

This advice is similar to that from Alcoholics Anonymous. Recognizing that there is a problem is the

How to Help

If you know a child living in an alcoholic home, try doing these things:

1. Gently encourage the child to talk about life, and listen well.
2. Invite the child on an outing, or offer a quiet place to do homework.
3. Encourage the child to think of people who would be understanding and helpful in hard times—perhaps a teacher, friend, relative, or neighbor.
4. If the parent drinks and drives, give the child your phone number and offer to come pick him or her up.
5. Suggest checking the library for books about alcoholism, or attending Alateen. Give the child the phone number and offer a ride to the first meeting.
6. Tell the child that he or she cannot cause, control, or cure his or her parent's drinking.
7. Tell the child that alcoholism is a disease, and it's OK to love the parent but hate the disease.

first step toward recovering from chemical dependency. If you think you might have a problem of this type, here are some steps you can take:

1. **Acknowledge the problem openly:** Limit time spent with people who encourage drug use.
2. **Seek professional help:** There are doctors, therapists, and recovery programs at many hospitals and clinics, which deal with chemical dependency and recovery.
3. **Seek out the support of people who are recovering themselves:** Many 12-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, are available for various types of dependencies.

If you grew up with an alcoholic parent, try the following:

1. **Find out more about alcoholism and its effects on the family members of alcoholics:** Contact Al-Anon for information about special groups for Adult Children of Alcoholics, or ask your employee assistance program for referrals to other helpful programs.
2. **Talk about your feelings and experiences:** Friends, relatives, people in 12-step programs, or health professionals are good sources of support.
3. **Remember, you didn't cause your parent's drinking:** No one but the parent had any chance of controlling or curing it.

Cautionary Note

As mentioned before, there is currently somewhat of a cultural reaction to what has become an overuse of the term **adult child** and the overgeneralization of the word *abuse*. With all the self-help books that have been written recently, it seems that nearly everyone is an adult child of

something due to a negative situation in his or her childhood. So it is important not to put parental nagging on a par with physical abuse. There really is a difference between not getting help with your homework and being hit by your father.

There are self-help books that go too far and seem to sanction shifting blame for all of one's problems to parents or others. This erodes personal responsibility. Although there are some parents who have done harm to their children, it is important not to overindulge in blaming parents for all of one's problems. There is some legitimacy to the criticism that too much "You did this to me" and "Don't blame me, blame my parents" is just another form of being a victim and that it creates child-like behavior, not adult-like behavior. Obsessing about damage is itself damaging, because it blocks out more affirmative thinking. That idea is reflected in a joke that even people in the recovery movement tell: Once someone gets involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, they just "Al-Anon-An-On-An-On." Perhaps there can be a balance between healing the wounds of the past and learning to develop skills that can help us face the challenges of the future, without living in the past. This idea is reflected in the saying: *It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility*. This means that even though what happened to you might not be your fault, you're the only one who can do anything to make your life better in the future. You have a choice: succumb or do something about it.

FUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

A prerequisite to having a healthy, functioning family is having healthy, functioning parents. The degree to which a couple has a good, solid, mutually respectful relationship is usually the degree to which they can model the types of behavior they want their children to exhibit. When two people in a healthy relationship become parents, they can model self-discipline and love for their children. In fact, the more stable and secure the parental relationship is, the more the children are free to establish their own identities.

In my work with adolescents at various treatment centers, I often encountered parents who wanted someone to "fix" their child but were unwilling to explore the possibility that their own relationship might be a contributing factor to the family's difficulties. If the parents aren't willing to look at their own behavior and entertain the idea that there might be some changes they could make, it is usually difficult for the children to change. When the parents are willing to learn, it gives the children permission to make changes in their own behavior.

Functional parents are able to model maturity and autonomy for their children. Their strong identity lessens the possibility of unresolved issues being repressed and unconscious. Therefore, the children don't have to take on elements of their parents' problems. The children are then free to grow in their own self-awareness and develop a

separate identity. Family therapist Virginia Satir (1972) calls this endowment “the five freedoms”:

1. The freedom to see and hear what is here and now, rather than what was, will be, or should be.
2. The freedom to think what one thinks, rather than what one should think.
3. The freedom to feel what one feels, rather than what one should feel.
4. The freedom to want and choose what one wants, rather than what one should want.
5. The freedom to imagine one’s own self-actualization, rather than playing a rigid role or always playing it safe.

In functional families it is permissible to express one’s thoughts, feelings, and desires. With the ability to communicate in a healthy manner comes an increase in the sense of personal power for each of the family members. They can then use those powers to get their collective and individual needs met. A functional family is the healthy foundation from which individuals can become mature human beings

STEPFAMILIES

Stepfamilies are an increasingly common family form, especially given the current divorce statistics. Stepfamily life can be very complex and problematic, with few guidelines and role models to rely on.

Part of the difficulty of these blended families is that they challenge established roles. Birth order and position in the family are up for grabs. Additionally, stepfamilies are born of loss. Therefore, as parents and children come together to form new families, there will be times when there are tremendous loyalty conflicts for both children and parents.

Challenges, according to Cecile Currier and Tim Kahn (1996) in *Learning to Step Together*, include the following:

1. The parent–child bond predates the couple bond.
2. There is a biological parent elsewhere who has influence on the stepfamily.
3. Children may spend time in two households, each with different rules and expectations.
4. The values and lifestyles of the adults and children living in a step relationship may be very different and often in conflict.

Part of the difficulty of readjusting to a new family system is that there frequently are unrealistic expectations. Everyone wants to recapture the positive elements of what was lost and attempts to establish things as they were before, which is seldom possible. It helps to recognize and understand some of the myths (see the text box) that surround blended families in order to better cope with the changes that are necessary.

A more realistic approach to adjusting to the stepfamily system comes from understanding that such families

Common Stepfamily Myths

1. **Stepfamilies are the same as nuclear families:** Given all of the dynamics and interactions with new people added to the system, it is unrealistic to expect that things will be the same as in the original nuclear family.
2. **Stepchildren are easier to manage when they are not living in the home:** Often, families are harder to manage when stepchildren do not live in the home, because when stepchildren visit, it can be difficult to establish a routine and basic rules. When stepchildren live in the home, it is possible to establish expectations that enhance adjustment.
3. **In the event of death of a spouse (rather than divorce), stepparenting is easier:** Actually, it is hard for a stepparent to compete with the idealized image of a dead parent. Whatever the stepparent does may be judged deficient.
4. **Love will happen instantly in the new family:** Stepmothers especially expect love to happen instantly, which sets up expectations that hamper adjustment. Many stepmothers feel that they should love and care for their stepchildren as they would their own. But love takes time to develop and grow.

Tips for Stepparents

Tips for Stepmothers

1. Accept the role of stepmother.
2. Don’t be a nonparent.
3. Clarify your role with your spouse.
4. Learn to live with the reality of ex-spouses.
5. Don’t blame yourself for every misbehavior of your stepchildren.
6. You don’t have to love your stepchildren—but you do have to like and respect them.
7. Save time for your own activities.
8. Make yourself available.
9. Be patient—relationships take time to develop.
10. Be cautious about physical contact with stepchildren.

Tips for Stepfathers

1. Develop a relationship before attempting discipline.
2. Help your partner establish rules, but don’t enforce them too soon.
3. Take the side of the stepchild if the mother is being unreasonable.
4. Remind children that they continue to be loved by their mother.
5. Get chore issues out into the open and negotiate.
6. Talk to your wife if you feel undermined.
7. It’s OK to ask for thanks from your stepchildren.
8. Discuss appropriate dress, privacy, and modesty standards for teenage stepchildren.
9. Share yourself; spend time with each stepchild.
10. Be cautious about physical contact with stepchildren.

Source: Cecile Currier, *Learning to Step Together*. Baltimore, MD: Stepfamily Association of America, Inc., 1996.

Thought Question 5.3

What are your experiences with blended families? How have people you know been affected by the role of stepparent or stepchild? What do you believe would help relationships in a stepfamily?

go through stages of development. Issues at each stage must be resolved for the family to become a mature, stable system that supports its members. In the first stage, the issues are recovery from loss and dealing with entering a new relationship. It is important to acknowledge feelings and to mourn the previous relationship. Children will need help in talking about their feelings of loss, jealousy, and guilt about divided time with parents.

In the second stage, conceptualizing and planning for the new marriage requires talking about fears and insecurities. It is important to discuss doubts about second marriages with your prospective spouse, as well as discussing ways in which your changed attitudes and behaviors will make this marriage different from the previous one. It is

during this phase that parents need to regard potential family members as a primary source of emotional gratification. The couple needs to establish a strong emotional bond to provide security for the children, even though it may be difficult for the children after having a primary bond with one of the parents. It is during this stage that the stepfamily needs to resolve feelings about the former family system and give up the fantasy that they will re-create the original family. In this phase, they need to begin investing emotional energy in the current relationships.

The third stage is the actual formation of the new family system by restructuring roles of discipline and nurturing. This incorporates the need to accept the stepparent's right to function in both of these areas. Another task in this phase is establishing generational boundaries. Children need to know that there are special times for them, and there are times when the parents need to be a couple. Accomplishing this will reduce the competitiveness children feel toward the stepparent. Children also need to come to terms with and define their relationship with their other biological parent. They will need help discussing feelings of anger, jealousy, and abandonment. This won't be easy, but it is important in the formation of the stepfamily for the children to remain connected to both biological parents if at all possible. Counselors often recommend that stepfamilies have regular family meetings to discuss such topics. During that time, the family can problem-solve as well as talk about the positive things that they are experiencing in their new situation.

To conclude this section, it is appropriate to share a quote from a course that goes with the book called *Learning to Step Together*: "Time passes, kids grow out of their insecurities, troublesome exes marry, move away, or otherwise loosen their hold. Couples grow closer through their crisis and stepparents become an accepted part of family history. In stepparenting your greatest ally is time. May you use it well" (Currier, 1982, p. 111).

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- The dynamics in our family of origin greatly influence what we do and how we act later in life.
- We all need attention as we grow up. If we can't get enough attention through positive means, well, negative attention is better than none at all.
- The "perfect" family of the 1950s is a myth. The ills of society are *not* due to the loss of "family values."
- The most effective parenting style is *consultant*—not being overbearing or overindulgent.

Chapter Review**HOW FAMILIES AFFECT WHO WE ARE**

The family that you grew up in has a tremendous influence on how you view yourself and your role in the world. Families operate as a system, and if you change any part of the system, you change the whole system to various degrees. There is a constant push-pull for closeness and distance. Part of the maturational process is to differentiate oneself from the family while still maintaining contact and connection.

FAMILY ROLES

Your position in the family influences your later behavior in a number of ways, including mate selection, parenting style, and career choice. Although you may have played more than one role during the time you grew up, a single role most likely mainly influenced how you gain attention. Competition for the various roles in the family has significance for how siblings interact. Your birth order affected your role in the family whether you accepted the role or not.

RACE, CULTURE, AND THE FAMILY

While many families share common dynamics, there are some differences due to race and culture. Some cultures put a greater emphasis on extended family. Others value allegiance to the family above developing individuality. Still other cultures place more emphasis on cooperation and support rather than competition.

STATUS OF THE FAMILY

There have been many changes in the nuclear family, and we need to adapt to new rules and roles. Most people still believe in the traditional family unit, especially when it comes to raising children, but economic factors increasingly require two incomes. That makes it necessary to become more creative about providing child care, among other issues. The current divorce rate means that more people will grow up in blended families with stepparents.

THE FAMILY THAT NEVER WAS

Many of our beliefs about the family structure of the 1950s were based on myths. There never was a golden age of the family. Some of our ideals were reflected from the media and its portrayal of how we wished we were. Putting the blame for society's ills on the "dissolution of the family" is therefore misguided. Most ills come from economic problems. There are many programs that can truly help struggling families of today.

PARENTING

There are a range of parenting styles, but the most effective for developing well-functioning adults involves a balance between being involved and setting limits. Young people need a certain amount of structure, but with enough freedom to develop autonomy. Ineffective parenting styles are "helicopters" and

"drill sergeants." The most detrimental style for children is "neglectful."

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

A common characteristic of those who were physically abused or who lived in families where there was physical abuse or substance abuse is the insecurity and lack of trust that develops due to the unpredictability of the situation. Many people learn the three rules—don't talk, don't feel, and don't trust—as a means of coping. Others take on a role that will help them deal with the family system. Although useful at the time, these coping strategies can result in problems later in life. There are sources of help for those recovering from dysfunctional families.

FUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

There are a number of characteristics that are common to healthy families. It is important for members to feel free to be who they are and to express themselves, and for the parents to have a strong, healthy couple relationship in order to model the types of behavior that are beneficial for the family. It is useful for parents to adopt a consultant style of parenting to help their children develop personal responsibility.

STEPFAMILIES

More people are forming families in which there are children that are "his," "hers," and "ours." There are three stages that the stepfamily system needs to go through. The first concerns dealing with issues of loss and entering a new relationship. The second is about conceptualizing and planning the new marriage while learning to share fears and insecurities. The third stage is the formation of the new family system through the restructuring of discipline and nurturing roles.

Website Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous

<http://www.aa.org>

Domestic Violence Survivor Support Network

<http://www.utexas.edu>

Love and Logic Institute (parenting styles)

<http://www.loveandlogic.com/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline

<http://www.thehotline.org>

Divorce Help for Children and Teens

<http://www.childrenanddivorce.com>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

Stepfamily Association of America, Inc. 1-800-735-0329

<http://www.stepfam.org>

National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse

<http://www.preventchildabuse.org>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each

chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your response to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. To what extent did your family dynamics (as described by Bowen) influence how you act in situations outside the family?
2. How accurate was the information on birth order in describing your general characteristics? How have you *re-created* your family in other situations in life?
3. How did your gender influence how you were treated as you were growing up? Did birth order or gender influence your decisions about education and career?
4. What style of parenting do you think your parents used? What style would you like to use, and what would it take to do that?
5. What do you believe about spanking? Do you believe it is necessary? Do you think it is effective?
6. How has the information on families affected you? What are the implications for your future? How have changes in your family system influenced your behavior?
7. What were the positive and negative aspects of the family that you grew up in? What do you want for the family that you create? How will you contribute to the possibility of that happening?
8. Were there problems with drugs or alcohol in your family? How did that affect you?
9. What did you learn from the sections on functional and dysfunctional families? What did you learn about coping skills?
10. What are your experiences with blended families? How have people you know been affected by the role of stepparent or stepchild? What do you believe would help relationships in a stepfamily you know?

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6

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND GROUP BEHAVIOR

One of the classic experiments in social psychology involved volunteer college students being randomly assigned to play the role of prisoner or guard for two weeks in a simulated prison setting. The study was conducted by Phillip **Zimbardo** (1973) and became known as the **Stanford Prison Experiment**. In the study the researchers set up a mock prison in the basement of a building, which had cells, solitary confinement, and a small recreation area. Few instructions were given as to how volunteers were to play their role, but from the beginning the “prisoners” were treated as criminals.

After just a few days into the study, the “guards” became abusive and unnecessarily cruel to the “prisoners.” They woke them at odd hours and dealt out arbitrary punishments. They forced them into hard labor and even withheld food. The students who were “prisoners” tended to become docile and submissive. One prisoner became so depressed that he was released after just a few days. All of the prisoners became demoralized, and at one point staged a riot by barricading themselves in the cells and refusing to cooperate. The reactions of all students became so extreme that the study was ended after six days.

Although there were ramifications as other researchers questioned the methodology and ethics of the study, the experiment illustrates the power of social influences on our behavior. Even normal, well-adjusted people in a fake situation can succumb to the power of roles and change their behavior in undesirable ways in a relatively short period of time. Imagine what might happen if the people weren’t well-adjusted or if the situation were real.

This is exactly what *did* happen when U.S. Army guards at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq found themselves treating the prisoners in an abusive manner. They threatened prisoners with dogs and humiliated them by making them crawl around in a pile naked. One particular photo that was reprinted in numerous newspapers showed a female guard leading a naked male prisoner around on a dog collar.

Social psychologists study how the thoughts, emotions, and behavior of individuals influence and are influenced by the interactions of people in groups. Social psychologists believe that we do not view our social environment solely on the basis of objective information that is presented to us, but rather that we react to it through the filter of our own ideology, attitudes, prejudices, and biases. In other words, our interactions with others depend a great deal on our own perceptions regarding who we think we are, what we think of others, and what we perceive to be the situation in which we interact. *Naïve realism* is a term used to describe the tendency of each one of us to believe that we see the world in a more rational, objective way than do others. And, often, we assume that if others are rational, they will see the world as we do. Further, if others do not see the world as we do, then they are irrational, harbor ulterior motives, or are simply misinformed.

Discussion In this chapter we will examine the process by which we come to have certain attitudes and opinions about how the social world works, and how those attitudes then influence our behavior. We will explore how the manner in which we get along with others is influenced by how we make sense of their behavior when it doesn’t match with our own. We will discuss group influence and peer pressure—when we are in a group, we often conform to certain norms whether we are aware of it or not, as illustrated by the Stanford Prison Experiment. By examining our perceptions, attitudes, and explanations of others’ behavior, we can also come to understand more about prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. Hopefully this will then provide information about how to stand up to social pressures when needed, reduce discrimination, and even contribute to more pro-social behavior. What this chapter will provide is an opportunity to consider

how your behavior is influenced by others, especially when you are in a group, and how your perceptions and cognitions influence how you respond to those around you.

Remember from Chapter 1 the idea that “we all make sense to ourselves?” In this chapter we will delve into understanding that idea to a greater degree. Some of the other concepts from previous chapters that will be expanded on are: (a) double standards, which happen when we have one set of rules for ourselves and another set of rules for everyone else; (b) the paradoxical nature of human behavior and how we often do things that are contradictory to our beliefs; and (c) ways in which you can observe yourself and others in order to have a greater understanding of human relations and how people act in groups.

This chapter also builds on Chapter 5, which examined the influence of family on our behavior; we are all a product of our original family—our first social group. And, after years of adjusting and adapting to the family system, we then have a tendency to go out into the world and re-create some of our earliest experiences. Now we’ll explore how these tendencies influence and are influenced by groups we interact with in the larger world.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 6

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. As in other chapters, you can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. What is naïve realism?
2. Define *person perception* and describe its three key components.
3. What is social categorization?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of person perception and social categorization?
5. What are attributions, internal attributions, and external attributions?
6. Describe the fundamental attribution error.
7. What does it mean to *blame the victim*? Why does this occur?
8. What is *self-serving bias* when talking about attributions?
9. Define *attitude* and describe the five circumstances in which you are most likely to act in accordance with your attitudes.

10. What are *group polarization* and *groupthink*? When are they most likely to occur?
11. List the seven conditions that increase the likelihood of conformity.
12. Describe Milgram’s experiment. Why is this experiment important?
13. What is the *bystander effect*? Why does it occur?
14. What is *altruism*? Why do humans act altruistically?
15. What are *stereotypes*? Where do they come from?
16. What is *prejudice*? What causes it?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND COGNITION

Person Perception

Person perception is a construct that attempts to describe the mental processes we use to form judgments and draw conclusions about others. Within the first few minutes of meeting someone we all begin to make decisions, form judgments, and start to categorize that person. For example, we decide things like social and economic status, amount of education, political or religious beliefs, level of intelligence or “sophistication,” ability to get along with others, maturity, and degree of open-mindedness. We also decide whether we like the person, have things in common, and might be potential friends, or whether we think the person is a jerk and we never want to interact with them again.

But, have you ever made a snap judgment about someone that was less than positive, only to find out later that you had a good deal in common with the person? Or, later on thought that the person might even be someone with whom you could be friends? Or, have you ever

felt awkward in a new situation and realized, even at the time, that you weren’t making a very good first impression? But, you were aware—even if they weren’t—that it was because of the circumstances, and you knew that the other person wasn’t getting to see the real you?

All of these things happen because our conclusions about people result from the combination of the following three key components (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010):

- The characteristics of the individual you are attempting to size up.
- Your own characteristics as the perceiver.
- The specific situation in which the process occurs.

Expanding on these ideas, *person perception* follows some basic principles (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010):

• **Principle 1—Your reactions to others are determined by your perceptions of them, not by who or what they really are:** Put simply, you treat others according to how you perceive them to be. For example,

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Will Rogers

what are some of the ways in which someone’s appearance might influence how you feel about them?

- **Principle 2—Your goals in a particular situation determine the amount and kinds of information you look for about others:** You focus your attention on those characteristics that seem to be relevant to your goals, ignoring details that are unrelated to them. For example, you might be looking for different characteristics if you are sizing someone up as a good racketball partner versus sizing them up for a potential date.

- **Principle 3—You evaluate people partly in terms of how you expect them to act in a given situation:** Whether you’re in a classroom, a restaurant, or a public restroom, your judgment about a person is influenced by social norms—the “rules” or expectations for appropriate behavior in that situation. For example, what would you conclude about someone who cheers in the middle of a concert versus in the middle of a baseball game?

- **Principle 4—Your self-perception influences how you perceive others and how you act on your perceptions:** For example, if you see someone who seems loud and boisterous, your decision to approach that person is unconsciously influenced by whether you consider yourself to be an introvert or extrovert.

Social Categorization

Social categorization is a construct that describes the mental process of classifying people into groups on the basis of common characteristics (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010). It’s related to person perception. One of the ways we size people up is to use clues, such as age, race, gender, and clothing, to rapidly decide what categories a person falls into so that we make a rapid decision about what to do next. For example, when you get on a bus and are looking for a place to sit you may quickly decide who you will sit next to based on the clues you pick up about his or her social category. Do you sit next to the nonthreatening grandmother, the middle-aged businessman, or the person who appears to be like you? Or, do you avoid sitting next to someone because of their race, size, or the fact that they have multiple piercings and tattoos?

We don’t even know we do this because it’s unconscious and automatic. The process of social categorization has disadvantages and advantages. On one hand, it’s a natural and automatic process that probably developed

Thought Question 6.1

What clues do you use to categorize people? What types of categories do you use and what words do you use to label these categories? Notice how your judgments, clues, and labels change depending on the circumstances. How has your family influenced the clues and categories you use? Are these serving you well, or are there aspects of your process that lead you to unsatisfactory results?

because it can stand us in good stead for making rapid decisions. It makes sense that the more rapidly we can process information, the better off we’ll be. Since we have so much incoming information, grouping it makes it manageable. On the other hand, a decision we make about someone using broad clues can sometimes be wrong—the person with multiple piercings might be the best person to sit next to. It’s probably not important for situations like where to sit on the bus, but it could be harmful when, for example, you decide not to give a person a job interview based solely on their name, or when you are aggressive toward someone based on how they look.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

We are social animals and are curious about why others do the things that they do. We want to make sense of the behavior of people around us, and we look for reasons for their behavior, especially if it doesn’t immediately make sense to us. For example, when you see garbage on your neighbor’s lawn, do you think it is because of an incident that was beyond their control, maybe the wind blew over

“Every society by its own practice of living and by the mode of relatedness, of feeling and perceiving, develops a system of categories which determines the forms of awareness.”

Erich Fromm

the trash can? Or do you blame it on the “fact” that they must be sloppy people and they don’t care about others? Now apply the same situation to yourself. When you leave a mess around, is it because you are “sloppy” and don’t care about others, or because you haven’t had enough time to clean up?

Attributions are inferences that people draw about the causes of their own behavior, others’ behavior, and events. People tend to locate the cause of behavior either within a person, attributing it to personal factors, or outside of a person, attributing it to environmental factors. **Internal attributions** (also called **dispositional attributions**) ascribe the causes of behavior to personal dispositions, traits, abilities, and feelings. **External attributions** (also called **situational attributions**) ascribe the causes of behavior to situational demands and environmental constraints (Weiten and Lloyd, 2006). In the above example, we attributed the mess in another person’s yard to internal personal traits and we attributed the mess in our own yard to external environmental constraints.

As another example, when someone pulls in front of you while driving, do you look at their behavior and decide that he or she is an incredibly reckless jerk who is selfish or in a bad mood and doesn’t care about others (internal attribution), or do you think that either the other driver was trying to avoid hitting something in the street or just didn’t see you (external attribution)?

And, a third example, have you ever been driving slowly in a residential area because it is night and you are lost and trying to look at a map while checking house addresses, only to have someone honk at you for holding up traffic? Shouldn’t those people have understood what you were dealing with (an external attribution) and been a little more patient or just gone around? And yet, what happens when you pull up behind someone you think is driving too slowly? Do you consider the reason for their behavior? Do you cut them some slack and attribute their behavior to external circumstances or just lean on the horn?

Attribution theory is a construct that was developed to explain a complex kind of behavior. Because human behavior is not simple, attributions are not just as simple as internal and external. Psychologists have identified other things that influence our attributions. I present a couple of these in order to illustrate the complexity of this behavior and how much it depends on the context. A second dimension people use in making causal attributions is the stability of the causes underlying the behavior. A **stable cause** is one that is more or less permanent—intelligence, for example. An **unstable cause** might be a person’s mood that day (internal) or something as unpredictable as the weather (external). A third dimension of the attribution process acknowledges the fact that sometimes events are under one’s control and sometimes they are not. If you are a gifted athlete, did you develop that skill (controllable) or is it due to your genes (uncontrollable)? If you are musical, is it because of long hours of practice, or is it that you were born with musical interest and aptitude?

This dimension also applies to daily events; if you are late to an appointment, is it because you didn’t pay attention to the time (controllable), or is it because you got stuck in an unexpected traffic jam (uncontrollable)?

Attribution Biases

THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR There are many ways in which we may err when we make judgments about the causes of others’ behavior, and one of the most common is called the **fundamental attribution error**. The fundamental attribution error is the tendency to overestimate the importance of a person’s internal traits and underestimate the importance of external situations when we seek to explain someone else’s behavior, as illustrated in the examples of internal versus external attributions above (Ross, 1977). In other words, the fundamental attribution error involves attributing behavior to internal personal traits rather than external situational causes, at least for other people.

When we think about ourselves, however, we tend to do the opposite. We’re more likely to attribute our own behavior to external, situational causes than to our own internal characteristics. This *attributional bias* is called the **actor-observer discrepancy** because there is a difference between the attributions you make when you are the actor in a given situation and those you make when you are the observer of other people’s behavior, as noted in the examples above. This goes back to the idea in Chapter 1 of how we all make sense to ourselves. We tend to attribute the best motives to our own flawed behavior, but when someone else does exactly the same thing, we tend to believe that they are flawed human beings.

There are several reasons for the actor-observer discrepancy. One possible explanation is that we simply have more information about the potential causes of our own behavior than we do about the causes of other people’s behavior. You know what motivated your behavior and how you have behaved in similar situations in the past. You also know what you intend to do next. For example, you know that you intend to clean up the mess in your yard on Saturday when you have time. You don’t necessarily know what someone else intends to do.

A related phenomenon is called **blaming the victim**. Sometimes we blame the victim of a serious accident, financial failure, or crime for his or her misfortune. We think that he or she just didn’t take the steps needed to avoid the situation or prevent it. For example, a woman is blamed for a rape because she dresses “provocatively.” Or, we blame the poor for being poor. We seem to need to feel that the world is fair and that we get what we deserve. Social psychologist Melvin Lerner (1980) calls this the **just-world hypothesis**. Blaming the victim makes the world make sense. After all, if the world is not just, then the same random thing could happen to us.

When it is not possible to justify the victim’s fate by blaming the victim, especially when people feel

sympathy for the victim, they tend to use a different strategy to restore balance to the world: They advocate revenge against those who perpetrated the injustice. If bad people are punished then justice is restored and the world is back in balance (Kaiser, Vick, and Major, 2004). This may explain the strong reaction of many Americans after the 9/11 tragedy: We were severely victimized so there was a general call for retribution and a consensus to find and punish the perpetrators.

OTHER ATTRIBUTION BIASES Another attribution bias is the **self-serving bias**. As we've seen, our explanations of our own behavior are designed to put us in the best light. *Self-serving bias* especially emerges when our self-esteem is threatened. We tend to attribute our successes to our own characteristics but to attribute our failures to external factors. We take credit for our success, but blame our failures on others or on the situation.

There are other types of attribution bias as well. If we don't know much about the other person when we draw conclusions about his or her behavior, we take shortcuts by using our prior knowledge, personal beliefs, and misconceptions to make assumptions. This is related to social categorization.

There is also an **attractiveness bias**. Although we know intellectually that appearances can be deceiving, we often subconsciously base our opinions about people on their physical appearance. The *attractiveness bias* leads us to rate physically attractive people as more intelligent, competent, sociable, and sensitive than their less attractive counterparts (Feingold, 1992). Closely related to this form of bias is the **halo effect**. Studies demonstrate our tendency to give someone the benefit of the doubt if we have information about them that is positive regarding their behavior in another situation. However, because few people have either uniformly positive or uniformly negative traits, the halo effect often leads to misperceptions of others (Dennis, 2007).

The types of attributions people make about others can have a tremendous impact on everyday interactions. Some aspects of the attribution process are logical, but often the process is illogical and unsystematic. For example, have you ever been really angry at a friend about their being late to pick you up and thought about how irresponsible he or she was, only to find out that your friend had been in an accident? What motive did you attribute to your friend prior to finding out his or her real reason for being late?

Attitudes and Actions

An **attitude** is a settled way of thinking or feeling about an object, person, or issue. All of the ideas that we have about ourselves and others, our attitudes, influence how we travel through life on a daily basis. Attitudes fundamentally affect person perception, social categorization, and attributions. As we'll see in this section our attitudes,

thoughts, feelings, and behavior interact with and influence each other.

Attitudes are usually positive or negative, but they can also be ambivalent, as when you have mixed feelings about a person or an issue. We have both **explicit attitudes**, beliefs or opinions that we hold consciously and can report to others, and **implicit attitudes**, beliefs and opinions that we can't or won't report. Often the attitudes that we hold but don't want to acknowledge have an even more powerful influence on our actions because it is difficult to counter thoughts you don't even *think that you think*. Whether we are aware of them or not—Chapter 2 discussed the *shadow self*—attitudes determine what we think is important and how and where we use our energy.

Although attitudes can be formed in many ways, the first source of information usually comes from within the family. For example, it is difficult to sit at the dinner table night after night without knowing what your parents think about any number of issues of the day. If your parents think that fossil fuels will eventually run out and that it is important to decrease our dependency on oil, then you might become upset at the automobile industry and the oil companies. You might begin to feel angry that more isn't being done to come up with alternative energy sources. As a result, you might decide to buy a hybrid or electric car.

ATTITUDE AFFECTS BEHAVIOR, BUT NOT ALWAYS While it is true that behavior is guided by attitudes, people frequently act in a manner contrary to their attitudes. For example, a person might think that stealing is bad, but if no one is looking when they are in the grocery store they help themselves to more than just the samples. The following are circumstances that make it more likely that behavior and attitudes will match (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2010):

- Attitudes are extreme or are frequently expressed.
- Attitudes have been formed through direct experience.
- You are very knowledgeable about the subject.
- You have a vested interest in the subject and personally stand to gain or lose something on a specific issue.
- You anticipate a favorable outcome or response from others for acting in accordance with attitudes.

Cognitive Dissonance

So, attitudes affect behavior. This is not surprising. But, some people are surprised by the fact that behavior can affect attitudes. Have you read the book *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss? In this story, a creature is convinced that he won't like green eggs and ham and so refuses to try it. When finally inveigled to try it, he discovers he *does* like it. The behavior—actually trying something and discovering he liked it—influenced the attitude; now he thinks green eggs and ham are great. It's *not* the case that you have to alter an attitude before you are willing to try

something. Rather the opposite is true: If you try something and it works or you like it, your attitude changes. Can you think of a time this happened to you?

Another way that behavior can affect attitudes is what psychologists call **cognitive dissonance**. This happens when you become painfully aware that you are acting in a way that is contrary to your attitudes, or you have two beliefs that contradict each other. Cognitive dissonance makes us uncomfortable so we do one of two things. If we can, we provide excuses for our behavior so that it doesn't really contradict our attitudes (for example, if we shoplift we might justify it by saying that we needed the item and just didn't have enough money on us at the time). If we can't do that we restore balance by making our attitude match our behavior.

For example, Leon Festinger, the researcher who coined the term *cognitive dissonance* back in the 1950s, conducted a classic study in social psychology in which researchers asked participants to undertake incredibly boring tasks such as putting spools into a tray and turning square pegs a quarter-turn at a time. The experimenter then asked each participant to tell the next participant that the tasks were enjoyable, intriguing, and exciting. Half of the participants were promised \$20 in exchange for telling the lie; the other participants were offered \$1. Festinger and his fellow researchers discovered that, after the participants had lied to their peers and received their money, the participants who had received \$1 rated the tasks they'd performed significantly more interesting than did the participants who had received \$20. Festinger used the theory of cognitive dissonance to explain these results: If you say something you don't believe, but you don't have sufficient justification for it, you're likely to change your beliefs in order to reduce the effect of cognitive dissonance. It would appear that receiving \$20 was adequate justification for exaggerating the truth. But, receiving only \$1 required that the person actually begin to believe that the tasks were more enjoyable than they were in order to keep from thinking, "I lied about that boring task for only a dollar."

GROUP INFLUENCE

Sometimes working in a group improves performance. The old notion of "two heads are better than one" is often true. When there are a number of people in a group working on a project, each one can contribute his or her own unique ideas and perspective. In a group, you can include people from a wide range of backgrounds each with different talents, skills, and information. But, improving performance by working in a group happens only if the group functions well together. Sometimes working in a group is disadvantageous because the more people involved, the more complicated the interpersonal dynamics become.

Maybe you have been in a study group at school, a work-related group with an assignment, or a community group trying to plan an activity. Sometimes the best decisions *aren't* made because group dynamics prevent it.

The person with an excellent idea may be ignored because a more charismatic leader has a different idea. Others may censor what information is available to the group for making the best decision because they don't agree with the information. And, sometimes groups can believe that there is a greater degree of agreement than there actually is when deciding on a course of action, because some members are intimidated by others.

So, although many times it's useful to work in groups, one also needs to be wary because of the potential for groups to go to extremes.

Group Polarization

One of the most common problems is the **group polarization effect**. This occurs when an individual's beliefs and reactions become more extreme through working in the group than they would be if the person thought through the issue by himself or herself. As members of the group discuss similar opinions, their positions become more extreme because they are discouraged from hearing dissenting points of view. Some members may not want to risk disapproval and others may have a strong need for a feeling of belonging. Still others feel powerful when others agree with them and thus they encourage extremism. This can happen in cults or with groups like the skinheads.

This phenomenon strengthens resolve but can also create more radical behavior. As people in a group sense an apparent shift toward greater consensus, they become emboldened in the belief that there is a need to take action.

Groupthink

A related phenomenon is called **groupthink**. This occurs when there is such excessive concern for reaching group consensus that information contrary to a decision is withheld, or when members' opinions become so uniform that all dissent becomes impossible. Such uniformity of opinion may have been responsible for the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba in 1961, when the members of the Kennedy administration felt so sure of themselves and their decisions that they authorized a botched attempt to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro.

A more current example could be the invasion of Iraq when there was a high degree of pressure to take action after 9/11. During the course of President George W. Bush's cabinet meetings, numerous reasons and justifications were offered for the necessity of the invasion. General Colin Powell, representing the military, initially expressed reservations, but it is possible that he became overwhelmed with the group's need to appear unified and resolute in their actions.

Janis (1983) believes that this style of thinking emerges when group members are so interested in maintaining harmony within the group that differences of opinion or suggestions of alternative actions are suppressed. Groupthink is most likely to occur in cohesive groups

where it is easier or more comfortable to think that “we all think alike.”

Be alert to the following indicators of groupthink that may lead to bad group decisions (adapted from Gerow, Bordens, and Blanch-Payne, 2009):

1. An illusion of invulnerability: When group members believe that nothing can happen to them they tend to be less constrained in their actions. For example, in the early and mid-1900s, members of the Ku Klux Klan perpetrated many acts of violence because they knew that they would not be held accountable.

2. Rationalization: Members collectively disregard any information that weakens their beliefs. Some members become guardians who protect the group from any contradictory information from outside the group.

3. Stereotyped view of the “enemy”: The “others” in the situation are thought of as being stupid or weak. This furthers the ability to believe that the group is on the side of goodness and what is right. The group can then ignore the moral implications of their actions.

4. Conformity pressures: Any member who dissents experiences direct pressure to change and begins to censor themselves and remain silent.

5. Illusion of unanimity: Due to self-censorship the group believes that everyone agrees on the planned course of action.

Social Loafing

Another example of how groups can influence individual attitudes and behavior in a negative way is **social loafing**. This occurs when one is less likely to invest full effort and energy in the task at hand as a member of a group than he or she would if working alone. Studies suggest that as group size increases so does the extent of social loafing, and that loafing is reduced to the extent that others in the group can monitor the inputs and behaviors of each individual. For example, studies consistently show that while participating in a common task, individual effort is greater in real, face-to-face groups than when there are numerous individuals working at their own computer stations (Gerow, Bordens, and Blanch-Payne, 2009).

CULTURE AND SOCIAL LOAFING Social loafing is a common phenomenon in individualistic cultures, such as that in the United States. Cross-cultural studies have found that social loafing is not only absent, but even reversed in many collectivistic cultures, including China, Israel, and Japan. In collectivistic cultures, group success tends to be more highly valued than individual success. The norms in collectivistic cultures encourage a sense of social responsibility and hard work within groups. As a result, individuals work harder when their actions benefit the group than when their actions just benefit themselves—a pattern referred to as **social striving**. In China and Israel, those participants who most highly endorsed collectivistic values were most

likely to demonstrate increased performance and productivity in groups (Bond and Smith, 1996).

Final Word on Group Influence

Groups can influence people in powerful ways. The mere presence of others can influence how well we perform on a task—either better or worse, depending on the circumstances. Under some conditions, the presence of others enhances individual performance, a phenomenon called **social facilitation**. This is most likely when a task is simple or well rehearsed. Performance decreases when a task is complex or poorly learned. This may help to explain stage fright and how someone who has not mastered a task yet may become rattled at having to perform. Others, who may have more experience and have “mastered” the behavior, may actually perform better.

Being part of a group can also make us feel less restrained. Behavior that we wouldn’t think of exhibiting by ourselves becomes more acceptable in a group that encourages such behavior. Being in a group can make us less inhibited, a process of **deindividuation** that allows us to relinquish personal responsibility and give in to the social pressure and the group experience. The evening news is full of examples of how out-of-control mobs can rampage through a city. It is easy for people to hide in the crowd and get caught up in the belief that what they are doing is acceptable since everyone else is also engaged in the same behavior.

While social influence can be very powerful, it is important to remember that individuals also have the power to influence the majority. **Minority influence**, the power of a few people, has brought about some of the most significant social changes in our time. Gandhi and his followers were responsible for the movement

Thought Question 6.2

When have you been influenced by a group for either better or worse? Which of the group influences were in play in your situation?

“It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestation of their aggression.”

Sigmund Freud

that led to the independence of India. In America, the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. is largely credited with bringing about the changes that led to desegregation in the South (Baird, 2011).

CONFORMITY

Though imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, conformity requires adjusting our behavior or thinking to align with a group standard. Sometimes this is beneficial because some degree of agreement on how to interact with each other is necessary if society is to avoid falling apart. Sometimes, as we’ve seen above, conformity can be disadvantageous. We can feel the pressure to conform in a wide variety of situations from simple things like how to act at a concert, sporting event, or political rally, all the way to complex, long-lasting things like gender roles. Whenever people conform to a certain way of behaving, social influence is at work.

There are two types of social influence that result in conformity. First, **normative social influence** draws on our desire for others’ approval and our longing to be part of a group. We all want to be liked, and that can influence our behavior in a number of ways. It can cause us to conform to the norms or social expectations about attitudes and behaviors that a group values. The high school years are notorious for being an experience in which peer pressure, for better or worse, exerts an extreme influence on people regarding how to behave. Second, we all have a strong need to be right. **Informational social influence** occurs when we are in doubt about something or question our own judgment and look to others as a source of information. We may change or form ideas based on the opinions and ideas of others. Normative social influence appeals to the approval motive and our desire to be liked, while informational social influence appeals to the accuracy motive and our desire to obtain correct information. Most of us would like to have—or at least believe that we have—accurate information on which to base decisions.

There are interesting outcomes that can come about in the relationship between normative and informational social influence. Under certain circumstances normative social influence can outweigh informational social influence—we act and conform even in the face of being given information that contradicts our own experience. Also, even when we’re attending to a certain body of knowledge and allegedly

wanting to find out what is true or correct, we can be misled. Wanting to be “right” may be a powerful motivator, but it appears that it is more important to be in the group that you think is right.

An example is the controversy around whether or not President Obama was born in the United States. A number of people who disagreed with his political views began circulating the story that he wasn’t born in this country. Despite the number of times that it had been shown that he was born in Hawaii, there were still people who insisted on seeing his birth certificate. Further evidence of social influence is the fact that the percentage of people believing the myth of no birth certificate increased since he took office. After two years, almost twice as many people self-described as conservative believed that he was born outside the country than when he was first elected. This controversy persisted even though the president released his long-form birth certification.

In the current climate of information overload where anyone can have a blog on the Internet, we are constantly being barraged about what we should believe and how we should think by people who may or may not have accurate information. It is important to remember that social influence, if it is strong enough, can have a powerful impact on what it is that you are willing to believe.



Asch's Conformity Study

Renowned social psychologist Solomon **Asch** (1956) showed just how suggestible we can be, how susceptible we are to the opinions of others, and how much we feel a need to conform. When Asch asked experiment participants to match the length of a line with the length of one of three other lines, they had no problem performing this matching task correctly. When they were asked to perform the same task in a group with experimental confederates (others who were *in* on the experiment) who kept offering the wrong answer, however, participants changed their answers to conform to those of the group one third of the time. How is it that people who could clearly see the correct answer would change their answer to match an incorrect group consensus?

Both normative and informational social influence may have played a role in these results. *Normative* social influence may have caused participants to change their answers to match the group's answers, and *informational* social influence may have made the participants think that their original perceptions were factually incorrect. After all, if 10 other people say two lines are the same length and you are the only one who thinks the lines are different, it seems very likely that you might have missed something that everyone else has seen.

An important aspect of human relations involves knowing when to go along with the group and when it is important to stand your ground and stay true to your own beliefs. In order to do that, it is helpful to understand the following conditions that increase pressure to conform (Asch, 1955):

- Your own feelings of incompetence or insecurity
- A group of at least three people
- A unanimous group without dissenters
- How much you admire others in the group
- Your lack of a prior commitment to a particular course of action
- Being in a public setting where your opinion is public knowledge
- Being in a culture that encourages adherence to social standards
- The need to make a difficult decision of high personal relevance

It is also important to note that it took only *one* other person supporting the correct answer in Asch's line-length experiment for the subjects in the experiment to greatly reduce their conformity to the group norm. This has significance for human relations. Sometimes being assertive enough to speak out in a group can have a powerful influence on *groupthink*. If you have an opposing view, it's likely that others do, too, but they are as reluctant as you are to voice their objections because they are just as afraid to look out of step with the group.

"The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom."

Isaac Asimov

Cultural Influences on Conformity

As you would expect, conformity is generally higher in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Because individualistic cultures tend to emphasize independence, self-expression, and standing out from the crowd, the whole notion of conformity tends to carry a negative connotation. In collectivistic cultures, publicly challenging the judgments of others, particularly the judgment of members of one's group, would be considered rude, tactless, and insensitive to the feelings of others. (If one disagrees, it is socially appropriate to do so in private.) Thus, conformity in collectivistic cultures does not seem to carry the same negative connotation that it does in individualistic cultures (Bond and Peters, 1996).

Milgram's Experiment on Obedience to Authority

One of the most famous—and infamous—studies done in the area of conformity was conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963), who studied the impact on behavior of obedience to authority. He had a large number of people assume the role of "teacher" and instructed them to deliver electric shocks to "learners" when they made mistakes matching various sets of four words. The "teacher" was instructed to increase the amount of voltage with each incorrect answer. Unbeknownst to the "teachers," the "learners" were in on the experiment and were not really hooked up to electrodes. The "learner" made mistakes on purpose and only pretended to show discomfort and pain when "shocked." The goal was to determine how far the "teachers" would go in administering electric shocks when instructed to do so by an authority figure—the researcher.

Even though the "teachers" could hear screams of pain and demands by the "learners" to be let out of the room in which they were supposedly hooked up to electrodes, many "teachers" continued to deliver shocks. Some even went so far as to shock the learners after they were unresponsive and it appeared that they had passed out.

Before conducting the experiment, Milgram surveyed a number of other people about how far they thought the "teachers" would go in delivering shocks. Most people said that very few people would go all the way to the highest voltage in delivering the shock. Even a group of psychiatrists predicted that fewer than 2 percent of the participants would fully comply and give the strongest level of shock. In actuality, 65 percent of the participants eventually used the highest setting on the shock generator!

Why did so many individuals comply with the experimenter's demands? The participants, who were extensively interviewed after the experiment, said they obeyed primarily because they believed that the experimenter would be responsible for any potential ill effects that happened to the learner. The participants accepted the experimenter's orders because they thought that they would not be personally held accountable for their actions. They were, in essence, giving the same response that so many of those on trial for war crimes after World War II gave: "I was just following orders."

Even so, after hearing of these results, many people think that the participants were unfeeling, unusual, or downright cruel and sadistic people. But, nothing could be further from the truth. The participants were truly troubled by what had happened, and by their actions. If you think that Milgram's participants must have been strange or different, perhaps you are committing the fundamental attribution error: attributing behavior to personal characteristics instead of the powerful situational forces at work (obedience to authority and lack of personal responsibility).

Critics have suggested that Milgram's methods were ineffective in creating a situation that actually reflected reality in regard to obedience. For example, how often are people placed in a situation in which someone orders them to continue hurting a victim even while the victim's protests are ignored (Blass 2004)? There are indeed differences between Milgram's research participants and the actions of those involved in real examples of being ordered to engage in heinous behavior such as the Holocaust. And, it is true that many of the Holocaust atrocities were committed either willingly by people who were eager to carry out the orders or by people who were afraid for their personal safety if they did not comply. But, on the other hand, it could be argued that this makes the results of the study even more disturbing. Milgram's participants were emotionally and attitudinally opposed to the orders that they were given and even expressed those sentiments. *Yet, they still complied with the orders.*

If people are willing to follow instructions in an artificial setting and two thirds were willing to administer severe shocks to someone who appeared to be unconscious, the experiment certainly confirms the power of social forces regarding compliance. The real lesson of Milgram's work is that even decent people with moral reservations will continue to follow orders. Those who are able to resist such orders, one would hope, are those who understand the power of compliance and aren't laboring under the delusion that "I would never do such a thing."

In a lecture given at Sonoma State University in 1999, Philip Zimbardo listed the following conditions that promote blind obedience to authority (Zimbardo, 1999):

- **Take away people's sense of uniqueness and individuality:** Individuality encourages spontaneity, rebelliousness, and independence. Take away individuality by submerging people in groups, putting them in uniforms, and disguising them.

- **Reduce people's information-processing, cognitive functioning capacities:** Encourage emotional, physical, high-intensity responding, and alter their state of consciousness through drugs, alcohol, and immersion in present-oriented activities.

Here is advice for resisting influence (adapted from Zimbardo and Wang, accessed 2011):

1. **Do not maintain an illusion of "personal invulnerability":** If it can happen to them, then it can happen to you, too. The problem is that social influence happens in situations a lot more subtle than in the Milgram experiment. People are trying to influence us every day. You need to be vigilant. People are generally good and trustworthy, but others make their careers as "influence professionals" who try to get you to do what they want.

2. **Be modest in self-estimates:** It is better to perceive yourself as vulnerable and take necessary precautions than to feel invulnerable.

3. **Be ready to say the three most difficult phrases in the world:** "I was wrong," "I made a mistake," and "I've changed my mind."

4. **Insist on a second opinion:** Delay in signing a contract while thinking about it away from the situation—never immediately sign on the dotted line.

5. **Develop "Discrepancy Detectors":** Attend to feelings of something wrong, such as details in the situation or the story you are being handed that do not fit. Trust your gut feelings when you sense you are becoming a target of influence, put up your counter-arguing mentality, and dig down for sources of resistance.

6. **Play devil's advocate:** Question everything, especially when the influence agent says he or she is only doing X for your good.

7. **Avoid "Total Situations" where you lose contact with your social support and informational networks:** Cults and the most powerful forces of social influence thrive there. You do not want all your information and social approval to come from these new sources.

8. **Ask for identification:** When in some situation you encounter authority and are being challenged, ask for identification, demand to see it, get person's name (write it down) and all details about the encounter.

9. **Always question if the means justify the ends, and suggest alternatives:** Remember all ideologies are just words—abstractions used for particular political, social, economic purposes; be wary taking actions proposed as necessary to sustain that ideology.

10. **Think hard before putting abstract principles ahead of real people:** Especially when following another's advice to act in specific ways.

11. **Challenge rules:** Rules are abstractions for controlling behavior and eliciting compliance and

“The line between good and evil lies in the center of every human heart.”

Philip Zimbardo

conformity. Ask, “Who made the rule?” What purpose does it serve? Who maintains it? Does it make sense in this specific situation? What happens if you violate it? Insist that the rule be made explicit, so it cannot be modified and altered over time to suit the influence agent.

12. Look for situational explanations of unusual behavior: When developing causal attributions for unusual behavior—yours or others—never rush to the dispositional, always start by considering possible situational forces and variables that are the true causes, and seek to highlight them and to change them where possible.

Bystander Effect

Another interesting situation in which social psychologists have studied conformity relates to the unwillingness of bystanders to help in an emergency situation. This has been called the **bystander effect**. It has been found to be one of the most consistent and powerful phenomena discovered by psychologists.

In 1964, Kitty Genovese, a woman who lived in New York City, was murdered in front of her apartment building even though she screamed for help when first attacked, and her attacker left and then returned more than once. Though it is unclear how many actually saw her being stabbed, at least 38 people were aware of the attack and didn’t respond or help. This terrible event caused considerable public concern. The terms used to describe the situation often included *apathy* and *alienation*. Notice that these terms reflect an internal personal attribution for behavior. The question of interest was whether this was another example of the fundamental attribution error. Was the behavior of the bystanders really due to personal characteristics or was it due to external situational influences?

Two social psychologists from universities in New York City, Darley and Latané (1968), began to study the factors contributing to whether or not someone would help in an emergency. They were not willing to attribute people’s failure to help to apathy and alienation alone. They thought there were situational factors that contributed to making such events possible. Their studies suggested that most people intervene to help when they believe that they are the only person who can hear and help the individual. But, if they believe that other people can also hear the person in need, they are less likely to help because they figure someone else has already taken care of the problem.

Darley and Latané suggested that there were logical reasons why people would not offer help in an emergency. They found that a series of cognitive events need to occur before a bystander intervenes. First the bystander must *notice what is going on*. Sometimes in a crowd or on the street someone might not even be aware that there is an emergency situation. Second, if a bystander does notice that something has happened they have to *label the situation* as an emergency. Just because another person falls down doesn’t mean that it is an emergency. Third, the bystander must make a *decision that it is his or her responsibility* and not someone else’s to take action. And, even after these conditions are met the bystander must still *decide what form of help or assistance is needed*. Would it be better to call for help, start shouting for others around to come to the rescue, or begin giving first aid themselves? And, what would be the best form of first aid, how should he or she implement it in that situation, and what might his or her own liability be? Given all these considerations we can see that the decision not to intervene on behalf of someone else is complex and situational.

Another factor influencing whether a bystander offers assistance to someone in need is that people also look to their **reference group**, those with whom they feel affiliated, to gauge how to behave. If they see others behaving indifferently, they tend to do the same, but if even one person chooses to help, the others will tend to follow (Baird, 2011). This phenomenon is similar to the conformity studies in which just one person changing his or her behavior influenced others in the group.

Thought Question 6.3

Have you ever personally observed or been part of any of the following: conforming to others’ opinion when your own senses disagreed (Asch), obedience to authority (Milgram), or the bystander effect? What happened? What did you decide to do? Why? Do you wish now you had made a different decision? How did your decision affect your later behavior?

PREJUDICE, STEREOTYPES, AND DISCRIMINATION

Prejudice is a negative, learned attitude toward particular people or things. Although the detrimental effects of prejudice have been well documented, prejudice against individuals because of race, ethnicity, gender, or other factors still persists. While most of us overtly deny having feelings of prejudice, many people still display prejudiced implicit attitudes. What causes this disconnection between our outward beliefs and our actions? Can well-intentioned, fair, considerate people still be unconsciously affected by powerful stereotypes?

Stereotypes are general beliefs about a group of people. In a previous section we called them *social categories* and we talked about how they can be useful for interpreting the world around us and making rapid decisions. As described in the section on social categorization, though stereotypes might provide us with some useful basic information, they very often lead us to draw false conclusions about people and ultimately contribute to acts of prejudice and discrimination. Stereotypes can be hard to disprove: When we hold stereotypes about a certain group, we're likely to disregard information that does not support those stereotypes.

The mere existence of negative stereotypes can be harmful. For example, those who are subject to stereotyping may not be able to perform as well on tasks as they normally would because of **stereotype threat**, the knowledge that they must work against a negative stereotype (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Some people don't perform well in front of any group, let alone ones that may be hostile. Stress reduces the ability to perform well.

Just as with attitudes, stereotypes can be explicit and implicit. When people hold an **explicit stereotype**, they consciously adhere to a set of beliefs about a group of people and can describe these beliefs at length. But, many beliefs actually operate as **implicit stereotypes**, an unconscious set of mental representations that guide attitudes and behaviors. Tests have shown that though most people consciously believe that they are not racially prejudiced, many white students more quickly associate positive adjectives with white faces and negative adjectives with black faces, suggesting that these students hold implicit negative stereotypes about black people. Black students tend to show the reverse preference Fazio (1990).

Foundations of Prejudice

As social animals, human beings tend to form groups and derive some portion of their identity from these groups. We tend to treat our own group as the *in-group* and favor our group positions and members; those outside our group are considered part of an *out-group*. We tend to be prejudiced in favor of our own group and prejudiced against members of other groups. When taken to

extremes, the in-group and out-group dichotomy can erupt into violence, as happens during a time of war or even at sporting events when conflict erupts between supporters of rival teams.

Prejudice also has an emotional basis; we are afraid of those who are different. This fear leads us toward discrimination, especially when we feel threatened. For example, when economic times are hard or when we're frustrated by our own lack of ability to get ahead, we tend to look for scapegoats whom we can blame for our problems.

A number of cognitive processes help people justify both their position at the "top of the food chain" and their treatment of those who are worse off. For instance, the just-world phenomenon leads us to believe that we must be doing well because we are good people while those who are suffering are simply getting what they deserve. Other social and cognitive processes that fuel conflicts between groups are all the rest of the concepts in this chapter: the fundamental attribution error, conformity, group polarization, groupthink, obedience to authority, and the bystander effect.

Reversing Prejudice

Although we might intuitively believe that contact between hostile groups should reduce prejudice, in fact mere exposure, or simple contact between two groups, does not usually reverse prejudice. What does seem to work is group cooperation to achieve a common goal. This principle was illustrated in the Robber's Cave study (Sharif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif, 1954). In this study, boys at a summer camp were divided into two groups which were housed in different areas; each group quickly formed an out-group bias against the other, which escalated to heated levels of conflict and competition between the groups. To bring the two groups together, researchers devised several situations that provided a **superordinate goal**: these situations required all the boys from both groups to participate in order to get something all the boys wanted. For example, a truck bringing food to the camp "broke down" and needed the combined strength of all the boys to bring it to camp. As a result of these situations, out-group bias dissolved and by the end of the study the boys had banded together in a single large group.

"If you're treated a certain way you become a certain kind of person. If certain things are described to you as being real, they're real for you whether they're real or not."

James Baldwin

This principle of cooperation also works in many other social situations. For example, to build relationships in the classroom some instructors use “jigsaw” activities in which each student must manage one part of a project in order to help the group to complete the entire assignment (Aronson and Gonzalez, 1988). (Such projects, of course, have to be crafted carefully to avoid other social phenomena such as social loafing and group polarization.)

ALTRUISM AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

What makes us sometimes put the interests of others first, even risking our own well-being in the process? *Prosocial behavior*, behavior carried out with the goal of helping others, becomes altruism when it is carried out without concern for one’s own safety or self-interest. We don’t gain any sort of advantage from performing an altruistic act, and we might even put ourselves at risk. Though displays of altruism don’t commonly grip TV and movie audiences, it’s important to remember that humans are capable of selfless social acts as well as selfish ones. What might cause us to act prosocially and altruistically? All the following have been proposed (Bateson, 1994):

- **Reciprocal altruism:** Reciprocal altruism suggests that people may carry out altruistic acts with the expectation of being the recipient of altruism at some point in the future or because they have been helped by altruism sometime in the past. In general, people show altruism toward their relatives, perhaps because we know that they will do the same for us.

- **Egoism:** Egoism is doing something beneficial for others in the hope of receiving something in return. An example is corporate sponsors who receive promotional benefits from charitable contributions, such as a 10-second acknowledgment on public broadcasting radio stations for their “charitable” donation.

- **Collectivism:** Collectivism is the idea that everyone contributes something to a pool of resources and then receives help from the pool when needed. Social security could be considered a form of collectivism.

- **Principlism:** Principlism is the desire to engage in prosocial behavior out of principle. Religious values that encourage helping others would count as examples.

Daniel Goleman, in his book *Social Intelligence* (2006), offers other reasons for why we help people in need. Based on his research, our brain has been preset for kindness. When we hear someone screaming we want to go to the aid of that person. When we hear that scream it activates the same part of our brain that experiences anguish. This is evident even when hearing someone tell a sad story, which can then activate the amygdala and related circuits for sadness.

The neural pathways for perception and action share a common code in the language of the brain. To feel any emotion stirs the related urge to act. Emotional contagion (the phrase Goleman uses to describe how we *catch* emotions from others) does more than merely spread feelings, it automatically prepares the brain for appropriate action. To feel with someone often stirs us to act on their behalf! Indeed, recent research has shown that when another person touches us and then displays an act of trust toward us, our bodies release the hormone oxytocin; this causes us to be much more likely to be generous toward the person in return (Morhenn, Park, Piper, and Zak, 2008).

In psychology, the phenomenon of *empathy* has three components: knowing another person’s feelings; feeling what that person feels; and responding compassionately to another’s distress. These three varieties of empathy seem to describe a sequence: I notice you, I feel with you, and so I act to help you. Philosophers have long suggested that easing the suffering of others also serves as a way of easing our own discomfort and pain.

If the human brain is wired to attune us to someone else’s distress and prepare us to act, why don’t we always help (as evidenced by the bystander effect)? One simple answer is that modern life acts against it: We largely

Heroes

Phillip Zimbardo and colleagues recently did a study using a nationally representative sample of 4,000 adults and found that 20 percent qualified as “heroes” in that they had helped during a dangerous emergency, taken a stand against injustice, or sacrificed for a stranger. Among the 20 percent who met the survey definition of a hero, 55 percent had helped someone during an emergency, 8 percent had confronted an injustice, 14 percent had defied unjust authority, and 5 percent had sacrificed for a stranger. The survey also found that someone is more likely to be a hero if the individual has experienced a personal trauma or disaster or the individual has previously volunteered in non-threatening settings, such as at a soup kitchen.

In the study, both blacks and Hispanics were twice as likely as whites to have performed heroic deeds. Zimbardo says they want to do follow-up research on the reasons for the racial/ethnic differences, which he speculates could be attributed to “greater opportunities to respond” or to the fact that “being discriminated against makes them have more compassion to others in need.”

“Heroes are ordinary people,” says Zimbardo. “You become a hero by doing an extraordinary deed.” Zimbardo also stated, “At a very deep psychological level, we all need and want heroes to inspire us. Heroes are really the soul of a nation. They represent what is best in human nature.”

Source: Sharon Jayson, *USA TODAY*, January 18, 2011.

relate to those in need at a distance. A term used to describe the situation in which we are increasingly separated by various technological devices is *social corrosion*. That separation means we experience “cognitive empathy” rather than having an immediate emotional response. And, even worse, we may have mere *sympathy*, in which we feel sorry for the person but do not experience his or her distress in the least. This removed relationship weakens the innate impulse to help.

This point is well made by Preston and de Waal (2002): “In today’s era of e-mail, commuting, frequent moves, and bedroom communities, the scales are increasingly tipped against the automatic and accurate perception of others’ emotional state, without which empathy is impossible.” While we are anxious or preoccupied, we fail to register the signs that someone else may be giving with a

smile, a sparkle in the eye, or the tone of voice—all prime channels for sending messages of friendliness. In short, self-absorption in all its forms kills empathy, let alone compassion.

The first step to promoting altruistic behavior is to become more aware of your surroundings. People on busy streets are less likely to greet someone or offer help because they are in an “urban trance.” In short, our priorities, socialization, and other psychological factors can lead us to direct or inhibit our attention or the emotions we feel, and therefore enhance or inhibit our empathy and response to others. Simply paying attention allows us to build an emotional connection. Lacking attention, empathy doesn’t have a chance. Perhaps better human relations would increase from just paying a little more attention to those around us.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Social influences are powerful; they can cause normal, rational people to do crazy things, and *we are all* susceptible to it.
- We filter our reactions to others through our own stereotypes, prejudices, and explanations, which we make up to explain their behavior. Sometimes we’re right, but *other times we’re wrong*.
- Our reactions to others have more to say about us and our background than about others.
- We tend to explain our own behavior in the most positive way, yet when we don’t understand why another person acted as they did, we tend to explain it in the most negative way.

Chapter Review

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND COGNITION

Various mental processes influence how we form judgments and draw conclusions. Our beliefs about others are influenced by the characteristics of the individual being observed, the characteristics of the observer, and the specific situation or context in which the observation occurs. Using social categories to form opinions has advantages and disadvantages.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theory helps to explain how we make sense of own and others’ behavior. We tend to overestimate the importance of a person’s internal characteristics and underestimate the importance of external factors when explaining the behavior of others. The opposite is true when we explain our own behavior. A number of biases influence how we make sense of others’ behavior.

GROUP INFLUENCE

Behavior is greatly influenced by groups. There is a tendency to behave like others in the group and adopt their attitudes. Individual attitudes can become more extreme. Individual effort can decline when there is group responsibility for a task.

CONFORMITY

People’s perception of reality can be influenced by groups. There are various factors that increase or decrease the tendency toward conformity. Under certain circumstances, people will go to great lengths to comply with the demands of authority figures. Our willingness to assist others in need is influenced by the number of other people present.

PREJUDICE, STEREOTYPES, AND DISCRIMINATION

Prejudice and stereotypes are a form of social categorization that results in negative actions. People subject to stereotyping may not be able to perform as well due to stereotype threat. Humans form groups and derive a portion of their identity from those groups. We favor our in-group’s attitudes and opinions and tend to be prejudiced against those of other groups. Prejudice may be reversed when groups cooperate to achieve a common goal.

ALTRUISM AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Altruism is behavior carried out with the goal of helping others without concern for one’s own safety or self-interest. There are different motivations for acting altruistically. There is evidence that the human brain is wired to be attuned to someone else’s distress. Increased use of technology decreases the ability to perceive others in need and develop empathy.

Website Resources

<http://www.socialpsychology.org>

<http://www.apa.org/topics>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. What are the clues that you use to categorize people, the types of categories you use, and the words you use to label these categories? Are your clues and categories serving you well, or are there aspects of your process that lead you to unsatisfactory results?
2. When have you assigned an internal attribution to someone else's behavior and an external attribution to your own, for

the *same* behavior? In general, when have you committed the *fundamental attribution error*? What will you be careful of in the future?

3. When have you noticed yourself or someone else *blaming the victim* and justifying this blame using the just-world hypothesis?
4. Describe a time when you became aware of an implicit attitude that affected your behavior.
5. When have you acted in a way that was contrary to your attitudes and beliefs? Was your experience one of cognitive dissonance? Alternatively, did you ever experience a time when your attitude changed as the result of something you did?
6. Describe a time when a group you were in functioned well. What made it function well? Describe a time when such a group didn't function well. What made it not function well? Consider suppression of information, group polarization, and groupthink rather than social loafing. (Social loafing occurs all the time; we want you to think about more fundamental concerns.)
7. When have you been influenced by a group for either better or worse? Which of the group influences were in play in your situation? Alternatively, think of a time when you spoke or acted counter to a group. What happened?
8. Have you ever experienced altruism, either your own or when someone helped you? Which of the influences discussed in this chapter do you think caused it?
9. Describe a time when you experienced or observed prejudice and discrimination. Analyze the situation in terms of the concepts in this chapter. What processes did you see at work?
10. What was your reaction to any one of the research studies described in this chapter (Zimbardo, Milgram, or Asch)? Were you surprised? Did it confirm your previous beliefs? Describe a situation in which you noticed similar behavior.

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7

DEVELOPING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Brian and Joyce were carrying things down from the “over the garage” apartment and getting ready to pack the car for the trip back to the beach when the close call occurred. Since moving out to the coast six months earlier they had been making numerous trips back into town to do the usual amount of running around and taking care of business. They had adopted a lifestyle opposite of most couples: living at the coast during the week and driving into town for the weekend to see friends and do errands.

Brian was feeling antsy to get going and wanted to grab only what he felt was absolutely necessary to be heading out. Joyce wanted to take care of straightening up a few last-minute things before leaving. They had recently rented out their house to a family that was willing to let them continue to live in the little apartment over the garage so they could have an in-town residence when they came in on the weekends. The previous renters had just moved out and the new renters were going to be coming in the next day and she wanted to have the place as cleaned up as possible.

“Come on, let’s get going,” Brian called out. “I’m whipped from all the crazy running around. It’s time to head for the beach.”

“There are just a few more things I want to put away,” replied Joyce. “I want the place to look as neat as possible for the new renters. There’s so much junk lying around outside that we can’t do anything about right now, I would like to get at least something done.”

“Yeah, but we’re coming back every week. The renters are going to have so much stuff in boxes that it will probably be quite a while until they even notice what is going on out here near the barn.”

“Well, I’ll notice,” Joyce said rather quickly. “And, there are some things that I want to put away before we leave so they don’t get ruined. I want to put the flower boxes in the barn.”

“Why’s that? They’re flower boxes, aren’t they? They live outdoors all year. What’s the point of putting them in the barn?” Brian’s mind began to race with all the thoughts of how ridiculous this seemed. “We had better not leave the grass out overnight,” he wisely thought only to himself.

“There are only three or four of them, but some of them are coming apart, and I don’t want them to get worse. And, besides, they’ve been under the eaves of the house for the last year before this,” Joyce called out. “Damn, these things are heavy,” she muttered as she bent down to pick up another planter box.

Brian walked over to where she was preparing to pick up the next planter.

“Babycakes,” he implored, “Do we really need to be moving planters? How about we do this the next time we come. I’d really like to get going and it doesn’t matter if we leave them out here. I don’t think this is really all that important.”

Joyce stiffened for a moment before replying, “It is to me,” and kept on moving planters.

“There are plenty of things we could be doing if we’re going to spend more time at it. Can’t we just get out of here?” Brian was beginning to wave his hands up and down in frustration. Thinking that it might be better to leave her alone for a while, he walked off muttering to himself. “Well, I’m going to go see if I can find those chains for the car. We might need them for the trip if things get ugly going over the coast range.” He turned and headed toward the barn. Instead, feeling confused about what was the best thing to be doing, he changed direction and headed for the apartment.

Joyce’s lack of response was deafening.

“OK, I’ll go make the doofus check upstairs to see if there’s anything we forgot or if there is anything else important in the apartment that we can take out to the beach and. . .” Brian’s voice trailed off as he climbed the stairs and continued talking to himself.

He wandered around the apartment and picked up and put down half a dozen things before deciding what to take, and then paused to look at a newspaper article before heading down with the load.

When he came around the corner, he saw Joyce getting planters ready to put in the barn. Having taken time to think about what was really important, Brian walked over to the stack.

“Which ones do you want to go next and where in the barn do you want me to put them?” Brian asked apologetically.

“That one with the metal band falling off would be great. Just put it far in the back . . . maybe on top of the trash cans,” Joyce sighed with relief. Her whole appearance and affect changed almost immediately.

After finishing with the packing and then pulling out onto the road for the trip home, Brian said, “I was almost dead-boy back there, wasn’t I?”

“That’s true! But now that I think about it, did you notice how much of a difference it made that you came back and helped me? What changed?”

“Well, I just remembered that what you think is important counts just as much to me as what I think is important, even if it doesn’t make sense to me,” he replied. “What was important to me was getting out of here as quickly as possible so we could get back home. I only figured out later that what was important to you was to make the place look as neat as possible for the renters. So, as soon as I realized it didn’t have to make any sense to me, it was easy to go ahead and help.”

“And I just realized that what I was angry about wasn’t that you didn’t help me pick up the planters,” Joyce admitted. “I was angry because you told me that what I thought was important wasn’t. When you came back to help, it wasn’t just the help that made the difference. What made the difference was that your actions told me that what I thought was important is also important to you even if it doesn’t make any sense to you.”

For many couples, a simple misunderstanding like the one in this story would have resulted in a fight all the way home. I would guess that probably 90 percent of all arguments have nothing to do with the content of the current argument. More often than not, they’re about deeper issues such as respect, feeling criticized, being valued, attention, intimacy, or not getting one’s needs met.

Discussion This chapter explores relationships, both platonic and romantic. It talks about the reasons we’re attracted to one person over another, the various ways we can love another person, how different people like to have love expressed to them, how to make

Learning Objectives for Chapter 7

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Explain why friendship is becoming more important and describe four strategies for reducing loneliness.
2. From the section on *Attraction*, describe six key factors that cause attraction between the sexes. Which is most likely to lead to a long-lasting and fulfilling relationship?
3. Why is it that *opposites attract* and what are the pros and cons of such attraction?
4. Describe *Sternberg’s Triangle*. Why is it important to understand different types of love?
5. Describe the five different ways that people express love. Why is it important to understand this? What is the *new golden rule*?
6. What is *attachment style*? Describe the three types, how they develop, and how the style can be carried into adult relationships.
7. In the *Bricks and Balloons* section, what is each attempting to do for the other? What are *external* and *internal balance*, and which is best?
8. What is the *dance of intimacy* and what are people trying to accomplish with it?
9. Describe the characteristics of a codependent relationship including *looking for what’s missing* and *power differential*.
10. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of Internet dating.
11. What do Fisher and Gottman recommend for making a relationship last? What do they recommend you not do?
12. What is *differentiation*? Why is it important?
13. Describe the seven *marriage myths*.
14. Describe the trends in divorce and the possible effects of divorce on children.

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

a marriage last, some of the problems that relationships fall into, same-sex marriage, and divorce.

FRIENDSHIPS

Demographic shifts since the 1990s have produced a nation of people who now more than ever need their pals. Marriage, the hoped-for solution to our isolation, is taking up less of our lives than it used to. We are pairing up later, splitting up faster, and increasingly deciding to avoid the whole quagmire by staying permanently single. In other words, we're a society of people who increasingly need more than a little help from our friends.

A **friend** is a person one knows, likes, and trusts. There are many types of friendships. We have best friends, close friends, good friends, and just friends. There are friendships based on activities, social groups, and work—a category that is becoming increasingly important. There are crossroads friends that we connect with during transitional times in life, and there are the friends that come at 3:00 A.M. when you need them.

Many of us long for a broader web of friends to support us in times of need. However, unlike ties with our kin, our connections to friends can seem exceedingly fragile because friendship is an elective bond. According to Lillian Rubin, author of *Just Friends: The Role of Friendships in Our Lives* (1985), kinship falls into the realm of the sacred, but friendship remains in the secular. Even though it may be the friend, not the relative, who takes you to the airport or brings you food when you are sick, our society still seems to operate on the notion that kin is forever, but friends come and go.

Yet, the notion that family is more important than friends may be illusory. With more than a quarter of the nation's households now composed of a single person (U.S. Census, 2010), we are fast becoming a society that is literally home alone. Even for those who enjoy or even prefer solo living, sneak attacks of loneliness can raise that panicky 3:00 A.M. question: Who really cares about me? When the other pillow on the bed is empty, when siblings and other kin are scattered across the continent and steeped in the minutiae of their own lives, one's best hope may be a good friend (Sandmaier, 1995). Rubin (1985) writes that in a best friendship, there is "a promise of mutual love, concern, protection, understanding and, not least of all, stability and durability" (p. 76). Best friendships embody the best of all the important relationships in our lives—kin, mate, and friend—along with the problems of all three. They bring us our greatest joys and our sorriest disappointments.

Friends are especially important for children. The difference between no friends and two good friends is like the difference between a pitch-black room and one lit by birthday candles. Think back to your childhood, to the time when you first liked somebody outside your family and he or she liked you back; it was almost like a gift from heaven. It meant that somebody who was not from your family, who owed you nothing, simply cared for you. Children who

don't have friends spend a huge portion of their day asking themselves, "Who will I play with? Who will I sit with?" These are questions reflecting the basic desire to know "Who will not leave me?" (Blume and Zembar, 2007).

As we begin to separate ourselves and grow away from our families in adolescence, friendships become even more important to us as sources of support. However, in late adolescence and early adulthood, friendships can take a backseat to romantic relationships. Marriage can disrupt friendships: Our interests change, and we begin to form relationships with other couples. In the same way, divorce can disrupt the friendships we formed as couples. "Do you have a best friend?" is a question Rubin (1985) asked 300 men and women (aged 25–55, working and middle class), whom she interviewed for her research on friendship. More than three fourths of the single women named a best friend, almost always a woman. In sharp contrast, fewer than one third of the single men could identify a best friend, and those who were identified were much more likely to be a woman than another man. Rubin's results showed that, at every age between 25 and 55, women had more friendships than men did, and the differences in quality were considerable. Women's friendships with each other rested on shared intimacies and emotional support. In contrast, friendships between men were based on shared activities and were much more emotionally constrained. Regardless of the number of friends we have on Facebook, few of us are in danger of having too many real friends.

By the time people reach adulthood, most have learned the rudiments of friend making: how to ask somebody to lunch, share a more or less retouched version of their life story, engage a new pal with humor or intellect or a talent for listening. After the initial connection is made, however, people often turn their attention elsewhere. Many of us still buy into the fiction that friendship simply happens, that it requires no special effort or consciousness to keep it alive and whole. There is also the embarrassment factor: Because friendship is not deemed a primary relationship in our culture and the expectations friends hold for each other are so rarely voiced, we may feel uncertain of our rights to go deeper, to make our needs known, even to directly express our feelings about the importance of our friends.

Like all important relationships, intimate friendships take work. They require us to open ourselves up, to trust, to share, to compromise, even to sacrifice. They involve caring enough for another person that his or her welfare becomes as important to us as our own, and caring enough to go far out of our way to render help when it is needed. One of the marks of a true friend is that they are there when there is every reason for them not to be, or when being there is costly in terms of time, money, or commitment.

Friendships also take time. Some friendships can be measured in how much coffee (or other beverage) has been shared together. Time and opportunity to truly communicate are necessary ingredients in a friendship.

Some conversations take place when there are just the two of you and there isn't a clock running. Priority needs to be given to the contact that is necessary to sustain the relationship. The effort is usually rewarded and well worthwhile in an era when it is more important than ever to have those connections (Arkoff, 1995).

Loneliness

We all feel lonely at times, but for some it is more of a chronic condition. Some of the contributing factors that cause or create a feeling of loneliness are decline in stable close relationships, emphasis on achievement as a source of fulfillment, and the increasing frequency with which people move.

Loneliness can be associated with significant life changes: leaving home, moving out of state, or entering the work force. Many students report that they feel lonely their first year of college. They were used to seeing the same people on a regular basis in high school. All of a sudden, in college, everyone has a different class schedule and with the addition of part-time jobs it becomes difficult to make contact with people on a regular basis.

Also, freshmen in college rarely bring along their social standing or popularity from high school. Everyone has to face the task of making connections and forming entirely new social relationships. Loneliness is not just a situation that freshmen experience; others at college experience it as well. In a study of 2,600 upperclassmen, lonely individuals were less likely to cope well with stress than individuals who were able to make friends (Cacioppo et al., 2000).

Technology appears to be a double-edged sword when it comes to loneliness. On the one hand, the increased time that people spend in front of a computer at work and on the Internet when at home has resulted in isolation from others. (This is similar to previous research showing that the more time spent in front of the TV the greater the chance of feeling lonely, although it's hard to tell if TV watching causes loneliness or if loneliness causes TV watching.) On the other hand, for those who are socially anxious, the Internet may provide a safe way to begin contacts that may eventually lead to face-to-face meetings.

Men and women tend to experience loneliness differently and attribute it to different causes. Men have been socialized to initiate friendships, and therefore tend to blame themselves if they don't have buddies. They think that they should do something about the problem and try to solve it. Women, on the other hand, have been socialized to wait and then respond to someone who has initiated some form of interaction. Women tend to blame external factors and wonder why no one has called (Santrock, 2006).

STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING LONELINESS Here are suggestions from Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer (2012) for reducing loneliness:

1. **Participate in activities that you can do with others:** If you join organizations or volunteer for

groups that support causes that you are interested in you will be more likely to meet people that you have things in common with.

2. **Be aware of the early warning signs of loneliness:** Increased boredom can be an indication that perhaps you are feeling alienated from others, and it might be time to try new social activities.
3. **Be positive when you meet new people:** If you have a positive attitude, act supportive of others, and give compliments when it is appropriate, you will find it easier to make friends.
4. **See a counselor:** Most colleges have counseling services that provide someone to talk with about how to meet others and develop new strategies for coping.

Here's the problem with such lists: Lonely people usually already know this information; many times they just don't have the desire to do these things. In this case, the issue is deeper. As we explore in Chapter 11, change might require considering what is keeping them from doing the things that might cure loneliness. In other words, being lonely keeps them from having to face something else that is even scarier.

LOVE AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

In previous chapters, we covered various aspects of emotions but we didn't talk specifically about love. Possibly the most complex of emotions, love is inextricably intertwined with marriage and relationships and so will be discussed here. We will also discuss attraction and partner selection and explore the interactions that take place as people deal with similarities and differences in personal relationships.

Theories of Attraction

CHEMISTRY OF LOVE Many people talk about chemistry when describing their relationship. They may attribute positive aspects of the relationship to having good chemistry, or say that they felt attraction to each other because the chemistry was right. As it turns out, chemistry does indeed have a great deal to do with feelings of being in love. When we meet someone who is attractive to us, a flood of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters are released. Some researchers describe the resulting feelings as being similar to an amphetamine high. This helps explain the euphoria we feel when we're with someone we like, especially at the beginning. This also may have some bearing on why some people feel so despondent when a romantic relationship ends. The loss of mood elevating chemicals can be experienced as a type of withdrawal.

Chemicals in the brain can also explain why relationships endure beyond the initial highs of romantic love. The progression from infatuation to the deeper commitment of a long-term relationship results from the brain stepping up production of endorphins. In a study using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to scan the brains of men and women while they viewed pictures of lovers and pictures of a close

friend, it was the photos of the lovers, not friends, that caused the areas of the brain rich in the neurotransmitter dopamine to light up (Bartels and Zeki, 2004).

Internet entrepreneurs are already trying to take advantage of research that has been done regarding the effects of a nasal spray that contains oxytocin, a hormone that allegedly can enhance feelings of emotional connection and trust between people (Young, 2009; Zak and others, 2005). A cologne-like product containing oxytocin is being sold as a way to enhance intimacy in relationships. Interestingly enough, it takes quite a large dose, about 2 teaspoons directly up the nose, to get a measurable effect in studies on trust (Zak, accessed June 7, 2011), and thus, these kinds of colognes are unlikely to have much effect.

MATE SELECTION Chemistry explains the emotional high of a new relationship, but how do we select the person to begin with? Being with the right person is a wonderful and fulfilling experience. The possibility of understanding love and therefore having a good relationship is enhanced through awareness of the factors that influence the choice of a partner.

Have you ever looked at a couple and wondered, “What are those two doing together?” As unlikely a couple as they may appear at first, there are always reasons why two people are attracted to each other. The following are some key factors in attraction:

- **Proximity/familiarity:** Proximity means being physically near someone and having frequent contact with them: at work, in organizations and clubs, where you shop, and so forth. Frequent contact can contribute to increased familiarity which in turn makes someone seem safer and that lessens the risk of initiating conversations.
- **Physical attractiveness:** Although we say, “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” unfortunately, we seem to do just that. We tend to like people who meet our society’s definition of attractiveness. Research indicates (Aronson, 1988) that if someone is good-looking, we attribute certain positive traits to the person, such as thinking that they possess socially desirable personality traits and lead happier lives than less attractive people. A cross-cultural study of sex differences in heterosexual mate preferences provides strong evidence that men worldwide place a greater value than women on mates who are both young and physically attractive (Buss, 1994). There may be evolutionary reasons for this. Young women are more likely to bear healthy offspring. Being attractive is a signal of health; healthy women are also more likely to bear healthy offspring. Similarly, women tend to like older and more financially successful men because, from an evolutionary psychology perspective, such men are more likely to be able to provide the resources needed to raise children to maturity. It is important to note, however, that both men and women tend to say that the traits they value

even more than physical attractiveness are kindness, personality, and intelligence. Additionally, there are more similarities than differences in attraction between the sexes (Buss and Barnes, 1986).

- **Reciprocity:** Reciprocity means liking people who return the feeling. It is the “I like you because you like me” phenomenon. The psychological costs are lower when you are involved with someone you know likes you, especially if they go first. There is also a self-fulfilling prophecy at work in this situation. If you think that someone likes you, you are far more likely to behave in a friendly manner to that person. This can in return encourage the other person to act kindly toward you, which confirms your initial expectations.
- **Similarity/complementary needs:** We tend to like people who are similar to us: those who enjoy the same activities and hold the same views. Valuing the same activities and views may be interpreted to mean that the other person is sensible and worthy. When people share your beliefs it also validates you and your ideas. Being alike results in fewer conflicts. But, some people may look for their opposite—a person who has characteristics they feel they lack. There can be a benefit in being with someone who can balance your life, especially in the area of deciding who is going to be in charge of finances, children, social activities, or other areas. (While we all do this to some extent, this can get out of hand for some people and lead to unhealthy codependent relationships, as we’ll see later in this chapter.)
- **How do we find a balance between these two notions?** It appears that similarities are far more important for maintaining successful long-term relationships (Surra et al., 2006). Having opposite characteristics may provide the spice of life, but when dealing with major life issues such as religion, philosophy, politics, family, work, and money, having common ground is best. That doesn’t mean there can’t be some differences, but people who differ too greatly in one area will probably need more similarities in other areas for balance.
- **Cost/Rewards:** How attractive we find someone may be influenced by how much effort or risk is involved in attempting to establish a relationship. We tend to balance how much effort we need to expend to make a relationship work (costs) against the potential rewards of that relationship. The person down the street who seems to be from a similar background and status (low cost in relation to possible resulting rewards) may be more attractive than the person across town who seems to be out of our league (potential high cost in relation to the possible rewards). One thing that increases the rewards is the amount of positive interaction. The person who gives us compliments and praise (rewards) will be more likely to be thought of as attractive.

“By all means marry; if you get a good partner, you’ll be happy. If you get a bad one, you’ll become a philosopher.”

Socrates (paraphrased)

Types of Love

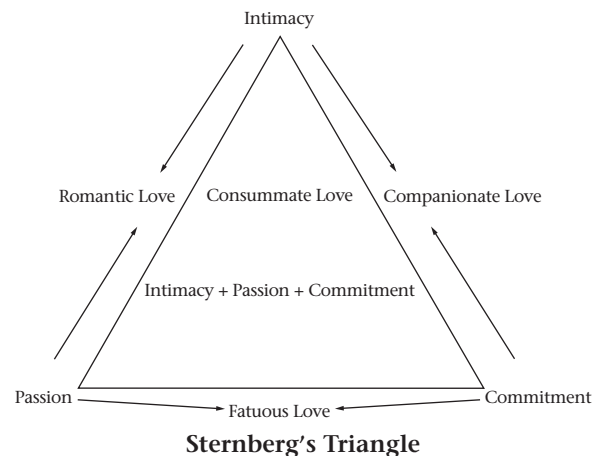
Love is a construct. As with other constructs, psychologists attempt to define patterns in behavior that are useful in explaining why people act as they do. A number of psychologists have attempted to delineate the components that make up this complex emotion. Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) believes that there are two types of love: **companionate** and **passionate**. The first is the type of love we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined; the latter is the head-over-heels romantic notion of what love is when we are first attracted to someone. Another psychologist (Rubin, 1973) believes that love has three components: attachment, caring, and intimacy. The construct of love that I find most useful is that by Sternberg (1986).

STERNBERG’S TRIANGLE Sternberg (1986) proposes a triangular model of love that has three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment (see chart).

Intimacy is the emotional aspect of love and includes sharing, knowledge of each other, communication, caring, and closeness. Some people mistakenly believe that sex and intimacy are one and the same, or that one leads to the other. True intimacy has more to do with trusting your partner and being willing and able to communicate deep inner feelings and beliefs. It also implies a willingness to be vulnerable and to be safe enough that one’s partner also feels able to be vulnerable. Intimacy tends to develop more slowly than passion.

Passion is the motivational aspect of love and involves physiological arousal and a strong desire to be with the loved one. Passionate feelings may develop quickly and continue for the first few years of a relationship, but most couples experience a decline in passionate feelings after a while. Perhaps that is why there are so many self-help books offering advice about how to keep the passion in your relationship. It takes concerted effort and focus to maintain passion over the long haul. For most people, it involves transitioning from the high peaks of passion to the deeper and broader feelings involved with intimacy.

Commitment is the cognitive component of love—being dedicated to a long-term relationship and being willing to hang in there and make it work. Commitment begins gradually at first and then rapidly increases as the relationship intensifies. It may level off at some point in the relationship. If commitment begins to weaken, it is often a signal that the relationship is in decline or is ending.



Each of these components may be experienced alone or in combination with the others. This helps to explain why there are so many types of relationships. Intimacy alone indicates strong ties of friendship. Intimacy with passion is romantic love, and intimacy with commitment is the love between companions. Passion alone is infatuation. Passion with commitment is fatuous love, as evidenced in whirlwind romances in which people get married without actually knowing the other person. Commitment alone usually is indicative of an empty marriage, with the couple deciding to stay together without intimacy or passion. Although difficult to attain, Sternberg considers love that involves all three components to be **consummate love**. This is the most ideal relationship, and the one many people hope to develop.

Expressions of Love and the New Golden Rule

Most people have heard the saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This advice is useful in some situations, but it can cause problems in a relationship when one person assumes that what he or she wants is also what the other person wants. Have you ever gotten a present that was what the other person wanted, not what you wanted? People do this with their feelings, too, when they project their needs and wishes onto others.

This projection is evident when people in relationships have different ways of demonstrating affection. If, at the end of the day, John meets Mary at the door with a glass of wine and an invitation to snuggle on the couch and talk about the day, he may be doing what he would like from Mary if the situation were reversed. This may backfire if Mary’s belief about what constitutes a show of affection is the house to be clean and the tasks for that day completed. Mary, thinking she is showing her affection for John, may put her energy into making sure that the house and their lives are neat and orderly. John will most likely be disappointed if his idea of being cared for includes playful contact, talking, and being hugged.

Perhaps we need to establish a **New Golden Rule** that ensures that people receive what *they* want rather

than what someone thinks they want. The old rule implies that it is important to be nice to people and consider their feelings. This might be done best by adopting the new rule: ***Do unto others as they would have done unto them!***

Dr. Gary Chapman (1996) proposed that there are five “Love Languages.” Keeping in mind that none of these are gender specific, here are the languages Chapman describes:

1. **Words of affirmation:** Some people need to hear expressions of love in order to feel it and believe it. This can include reassurances that their partner finds qualities about them attractive. There is an old joke about a woman who complained to her husband that he never said “I love you.” He looked up at her and said, “I married you, didn’t I?” They obviously had different needs regarding the verbal expression of affection.
2. **Quality time:** Love is experienced by some people when the other person in the relationship sets aside specific time to spend with them. It doesn’t have to include talking, but just the act of being together. This quality time isn’t something that you can just *hurry up* and experience. In the past, there was a belief that people who spend considerable time apart could just make up for that with quality time. But intimacy doesn’t always happen on schedule, and may need plenty of time just being together to emerge.
3. **Receiving gifts:** This is more than remembering birthdays and anniversaries; little “gifts” can be given on a daily basis. Some people feel loved by getting a phone call. For others, the gift isn’t as important as the experience of feeling that someone was thinking of you and knows you well enough to give you a present that shows that he or she cares.
4. **Acts of service:** Performing a task, of almost any kind, that is helpful to the other person can be perceived as an expression of love. For some people it is important to know that the other person was not only thinking of them, but wanted to actually have that be known through his or her labor.
5. **Physical contact:** We all know people who are “touchers” who feel attended to only through physical contact. This could include hugs, a pat on the back, sitting close while reading or watching TV, or holding hands while out walking.

How you express love can be a choice, and learning to speak your spouse’s language can make your marriage richer and more fulfilling. Take the time to find out which of these *languages* is most important for your partner. It may take effort to learn how to speak the language your partner will respond to best, but in doing so, your life together will be more satisfying. The more you try to do what your partner likes, the more likely he or she will be

willing to do what you like. This is what happened in the opening story about Brian and Joyce.

Attachment Styles and Romantic Relationships

Attachment style is a construct developed to explain and describe the types of emotional bonds that develop between babies and their caregivers. The reason that psychologists are so interested in this idea is that it appears that the type of emotional bond developed in infancy affects behavior throughout life. Attachment style appears to develop through the amount and quality of “sensitive responding” by the caregiver. This sensitive responding consists of noticing the infant’s needs, interpreting them accurately, and responding appropriately (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Of course, no caregiver can do this perfectly all the time; what matters is that they do well enough most of the time. Physical comfort is also a part of sensitive responding. It is important for infants and young children to be able to use their caregiver as a “secure base,” venturing out to explore and then returning when they are afraid or need comfort. As an example of the need among primates for sensitive responding, two researchers conducted experiments showing that infant monkeys prefer a soft terry-cloth mother surrogate to a wire one, even when only the wire one dispenses milk. Also, infant monkeys severely deprived of physical contact often come to behave differently from their normally reared peers, usually showing very dysfunctional social behavior (Novak and Harlow, 1975).

Ainsworth et al. (1978) propose the following secure and insecure attachment styles that form through the amount and type of sensitive responding:

- **Secure attachment style:** Sensitive responding by the caregiver to the infant’s needs results in an infant who demonstrates secure attachment. Securely attached infants trust their caretaker, don’t fear abandonment, and explore their world. They are often socially skilled later in life, and get along well with peers and teachers (Stroufe et al., 2005).
- **Avoidant attachment style:** When the caregiver is distant or rejecting, infants avoid them or suppress the desire to be close, tend to fear abandonment, and are more timid. These children also may be more aggressive with peers, and are prone to becoming bullies (Troy and Stroufe, 1987).
- **Resistant/ambivalent attachment style:** Inconsistent caregivers are unpredictable, sometimes responding sensitively and sometimes being distracted or rejecting. The result is that the infant may sometimes cling anxiously to them and other times fight against the closeness by pushing away, or may even do both at the same time. These children tend to be passive with peers and may be easily upset and difficult to comfort (Stroufe et al., 2005).

Attachment theory provides not only a framework for understanding emotional reactions in infants, but also a framework for understanding love, loneliness, and grief in adults. Attachment styles in adults are thought to stem directly from the mental attitudes and beliefs about oneself and others that were developed during infancy and childhood. Ainsworth and colleagues' description of attachment styles has been translated into adult relationship styles as follows (Hazan and Shaver, 1987):

- **Secure** adults find it relatively easy to get close to others and are comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them. Secure adults don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to them.
- **Avoidant** adults are somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; they find it difficult to trust others completely or allow themselves to depend on others. Avoidant adults are nervous when anyone gets too close, and often romantic partners want them to be more intimate than avoidants feel comfortable being.
- **Anxious/ambivalent** adults find that others are reluctant to get as close as they would like. Anxious/ambivalent adults often worry that their partner doesn't really love them or won't want to stay with them. Anxious/ambivalent adults want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Keep in mind, though, that attachment styles aren't cast in stone. Through life experiences, attachment styles can change. Stressful or traumatic events may lessen the ability to form attachments, and positive experiences may strengthen the ability to form relationships. Some individuals revise their attachment styles as they experience relationships in their adult years (Santrock, 2006).

Bricks and Balloons

The contradictory maxims *birds of a feather flock together* and *opposites attract* have been around for some time. As we've seen in a previous section, sometimes one person is attracted to another because he or she represents opposite values. Or, some people marry someone just because he or she represents everything parents or friends don't want for them in a partner. But, when people look to someone else to provide what may be lacking in themselves, there is usually potential difficulty waiting in the wings: *The qualities that make someone attractive at the time are often the very things that will drive you crazy a year later!*

It is valuable to explore the dynamics of what happens in a relationship in which **opposites attract** was the basis of the attraction. I call this the "brick-and-balloon" combination. One of the two talks all the time; the other one hardly says a word. One of them is spontaneous and energetic; the other is methodical and slow moving. One of them is orderly and organized; the other is casual and

sloppy. All of these are combinations of very different people who appear to be somewhat complementary.

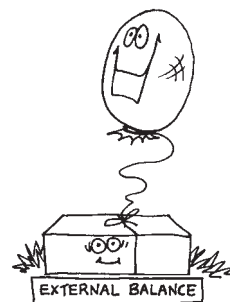
So what are the bricks and balloons doing for each other? They are attempting to balance each other. Here is an example of that type of relationship: The man is authoritarian and needs things to be done just right. He wants order, structure, and logic. The woman may be more of a free spirit, inclined to follow the whims of the moment. The more the man tries to lay down the rules for the house, the more the woman tries to balance things by going in the other direction. She may say things like, "Relax a little. You're too hard on the kids. Let's not make a big deal out of everything." To which he replies, "Somebody has to lay down the rules around here. If it were up to you, the house would be destroyed and the kids would be running naked in the streets." Simplistic and stereotypical, but hopefully the idea is clear.

Some people maintain that type of relationship for many years. That is an example of **external balance**. The more rigid or heavy one becomes, the more the other tries to balance things by lightening them up. The farther one goes in one direction, the farther the other goes in the other direction. When a brick and a balloon are tied together, a great deal of stress is put on the string. Too much of a person's behavior is based on reacting to what the other has done. The constant need to balance each other puts tension in the relationship. Sometimes, the string breaks.

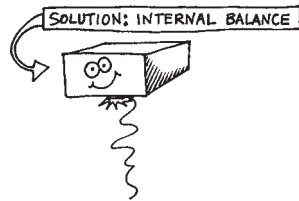
The problem comes from attempting to find balance by looking for an external source. A person who looks to someone else to provide what is missing eventually becomes resentful of the other person's ability to fill that need. The very traits or abilities that were attractive during the courtship are the same ones that can become restrictive in a relationship. He was so brilliant and such a dazzling conversationalist that she couldn't help being awed at how he filled the gaps when she was shy in social situations. A year later, she resents it when she can't get a word in edgewise. How will she ever learn to speak up if she has to compete with someone who does it so much better?

Another variation is the woman who marries a man because he is lively, fun, and spontaneous, and then resents him because she feels she has to take on all the responsibilities of the household. How can she have fun when that's all he ever does, and how can she relax when

POTENTIAL PROBLEM



Looking for what's missing



Developing both parts

he never notices what needs to be done? The free-spirited balloon who is adventurous, creative, and spontaneous can later be perceived as being irresponsible and flaky. The dependable brick who is reliable, predictable, and conscientious can later be seen as rigid and boring. The traits that originally seemed so wonderful have a flip side—which is why it is difficult, in most cases, to maintain a relationship based on the attraction of opposites.

A better relationship develops when each person involved is capable of **internal balance**. This occurs when each partner has the choice of sometimes being a brick and sometimes being a balloon—being able to trade roles. This compatibility enables partners to take turns at filling a role when the circumstances are appropriate. She may be the brick when it comes to finances, and he may be the balloon in the role of social coordinator for the couple. They may reverse those roles in different situations: He might think about where to go that will save them money (the brick) and she might dream about exotic vacations (the balloon). Or she may be the brick with the finances for half the year, and he then takes over that role for the other half. However it works, the more each person in the relationship is internally balanced, the greater the potential for compatibility between the two.

Thought Question 7.1

Which is more important: Birds of a feather flock together or opposites attract? What are the implications of each? What have you learned about attraction, and how does it apply to you?

The Dance of Intimacy

Most couples want intimacy in their relationship. Unfortunately, many are not capable of sustaining it. How often have you seen couples who seem to start arguments whenever things have been going too well for too long? Most of us say we want someone to be open and honest with, someone with whom we can be real and share our vulnerabilities. Yet that kind of intimacy also makes some people fearful of being hurt. Some people unconsciously guard against closeness because they fear that they will be controlled or lose their identity. Others think that intimacy will mean too many sacrifices and that they will lose their freedom.

We all have comfort zones for the level of closeness we can tolerate. Many relationships go through an on-again-off-again cycle as each person tries to change the other in hopes of establishing the level of closeness necessary to feel safe. This is seldom a conscious negotiation. Lerner (1989) calls this the **dance of intimacy**.

For example, some couples adopt a style of relating to each other in which they are cast into the roles of pursuer and pursued. This allows each one to believe that the reason for not getting closer is the other person's fault. In reality, both may be equally responsible for maintaining a relationship based on a certain amount of distance.

For example, one young man told me about his girlfriend who had been wanting to get married for years. He confessed to having treated her shabbily at times but said that now, after having been through a number of maturing life experiences and some personal counseling, he was ready to make the commitment. He asked her to marry him and, within two weeks, she was saying that she thought maybe they should date other people for a while just to be sure. Can you guess the rest of the story? As soon as he wanted her, she was no longer interested.

In her book *The Dance of Intimacy*, Harriet Lerner (1989) points out that the *pursuer and the pursued*, the one allegedly wanting distance, are often accomplishing the same goal and are more alike than different in some respects. Each takes on a particular role that fulfills his or her psychological needs and proceeds to play out the drama. The important element that keeps the game going is that each person has to believe that he or she is not getting what he or she wants because the other person is denying it. The couple gets caught up in the various story lines of each episode and fails to notice the repetition. To be aware of it might mean examining their own fears, needs, and behaviors.

Another variation of the dance of intimacy takes place when a person is attracted only to people who aren't interested or aren't available. There are people who make a game of seeing whom they can interest in a relationship, only to change their minds after achieving their goal and move on to the next pursuit. There are relationships based on exchanging the roles of pursuer

*“Men always want to be a woman’s first love.
Women want to be a man’s last romance.”*

Oscar Wilde

and pursued. There are couples who take turns creating distance as they chase each other back and forth. For some people, the excitement of a relationship is mainly in looking for and finding one, and not in the growth and continuance of one.

Positive, healthy relationships can and do exist, though. Successful marriages are more common for people who are relatively well-adjusted—those who are self-aware and have options for behavior. A well-rounded and internally balanced person will be better able to find someone who is similarly well-adjusted. People with high self-esteem tend to attract others who have high self-esteem. The rewards of good relationships are more readily available to those who *want* one than to those who *need* one. We all have psychological needs we want to have met, but there is a difference between wanting those needs met and needing to have those needs met at all times by someone else. Two whole people will be able to reciprocate and experience the positive aspects of a relationship better than people who are looking for what is “missing.”

This is why it’s important for you to be aware of the factors that influence couples’ interactions and understand what parts apply to you so that you can avoid doing things that are counterproductive.

Thought Question 7.2

What concerns do you have about intimacy? Have you ever played the “three-quarter-waltz” dance of intimacy in a relationship? What is your closeness comfort zone, and how do you try to maintain it?

Codependent Relationships

A **codependent relationship** is one in which one person has a problem, and the partner has as much psychological investment in the problem as the person who actually has the problem. Both partners may be getting their needs met by being in a system where one person isn’t functioning very well. People in that type of situation frequently develop a self-perpetuating cycle that keeps both locked in a limiting pattern of beliefs and behaviors.

I first encountered a truly codependent relationship years ago while in graduate school. I was hired one summer to do light construction work by a man I’ll call “Art,” who did remodeling and built decks on people’s homes. The first few days on the job went well, although Art spent a lot of time complaining about his wife of 30 years. Then one morning he showed up at 7:30 A.M. drinking vodka with his orange juice. By noon, he was unable to work, and he sat in the shade calling out instructions to me. At the end of the day, he was so smashed that I had to drive him home. We didn’t work the next day. On the third day, he showed up with a tale of woe about having been kicked out of the house and sleeping in the car. He spent the next night at a friend’s house. On the following day, he said that he had apologized to his wife and asked for her forgiveness, so he was allowed to return home. Things went fine for a few days, and then one morning he showed up drinking again, and the whole process started over.

When this cycle was repeated for the third time, I knew this was a pretty crazy situation. It was unhealthy for me as well, and I began to feel that I had been roped into his routine. I was contributing to the situation by listening to him complain all day while doing his work for him and then driving him home when he was drunk. When I began to figure out the pattern and could see how destructive it was, I quit the job.

Although it was obvious that he had a problem, even back then I began to wonder about his wife. What was *she* getting out of the relationship that caused her to stay? I know now that they had a classic *Saints and Sinners* routine going. She was very religious, and when he came home drunk it gave her the chance to give him “hellfire and damnation” and righteously kick him out of the house. He then did penance by sleeping in the car. After a cooling-off period, he crawled home and begged for forgiveness. This gave her the chance to read him the Bible, pound the pulpit, and feel like she had saved him. She then forgave him. After a short time, the whole drama would be replayed. She needed him to have a problem as much as he did.

LOOKING FOR WHAT’S MISSING Most forms of codependence involve one person with a problem and another person needing him or her to have that problem. In some cases, the codependent partner may unconsciously encourage the behavior in the partner with the problem. For example, in the example above, the religious wife might have been doing things unconsciously that would

annoy her husband so much that he felt he needed to get drunk to cope.

One variation occurs when one or both partners feel so inadequate and incomplete that they have to have someone else from whom they can derive their identity. Their unspoken contract may be agreeing to have both people live one person's life. For example, some women dedicate themselves to supporting their husband's life and have no interests of their own. Another variation involves the person for whom it is such a dire necessity to be in a relationship, no matter how detrimental, that the need borders on addiction. People in all of these types of codependent relationships are extreme examples of looking to others to supply what is missing in themselves.

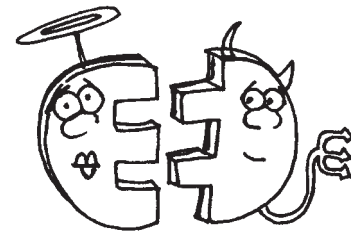
Two incomplete people looking for the other half are like two pieces of a larger jigsaw puzzle. The two pieces can fit together but still not provide the whole picture. The illusion is that two pieces can make a whole relationship. People looking for what is missing in themselves may find a partner who provides the missing piece, but there is a price to pay. One price is that partners locked together in a mutually unhealthy dependence usually start to resent each other. Another price is that if each is allowed to be only his or her piece of the puzzle, neither can grow or change.

There are relationships in which one partner never does anything without the other. They both cling to their respective roles and to each other, fearing what might happen otherwise. That kind of situation usually ends up stifling both parties. The best relationships are those that allow some degree of freedom in behavior and interests. Those who have been married know that, no matter how much you love someone or how good the relationship is, there are times when you wake up and don't want to see your partner's ugly mug. To maintain or revitalize a relationship, there are times when the partners need to be apart. It can be healthy for the relationship when each partner has some outside interests. This is possible only if both partners are secure in their own identities and can allow each other to have some separate time and space.

If a person in a codependent relationship begins to be dissatisfied with the limitations of his or her arrangement and tries to change, one of three things will happen. The person not initiating the change will:

1. Attempt to stop the other from changing with threats, put-downs, or sabotage (just like the crab story in Chapter 1).
2. Leave the relationship or threaten to do so in an attempt to stop the other from changing.
3. Begin to make changes and come to the realization that growth and change can be in his or her best interests, too.

If one partner wants to attain more *selfhood* by developing a stronger sense of identity, the other partner may respond with one of these three actions. Family systems theory states that if one element of the system changes, the



Searching for the other half?

whole system changes. That may explain why the person not choosing or initiating the change will be reactionary. If one partner changes, inevitably, the other will have to change also. That invariably raises the anxiety of the person least interested in changing the system.

POWER DIFFERENTIAL The following is another example of a common codependent relationship. Although either sex can play either role, for the sake of discussion, I'll use the stereotypical example of the woman as *Bambi* and the man as *Godzilla*. She is kind, considerate, and generous to a fault. She would never think of doing anything that would make someone else feel bad and usually sacrifices her own needs for others. He, on the other hand, breathes fire and smoke, stomps on people, and causes a great deal of damage without even being aware of it. Godzilla doesn't allow Bambi to leave the house without permission. He even once dismantled the car to maintain more control over her. He feels threatened by any kind of advancement Bambi makes, whether it is educational, vocational, or personal, and goes on a rampage. Once he even stomped term papers into the mud. (Other Godzillas have been known to sabotage their wives' careers, have an affair, go on a binge, or physically abuse the family.)

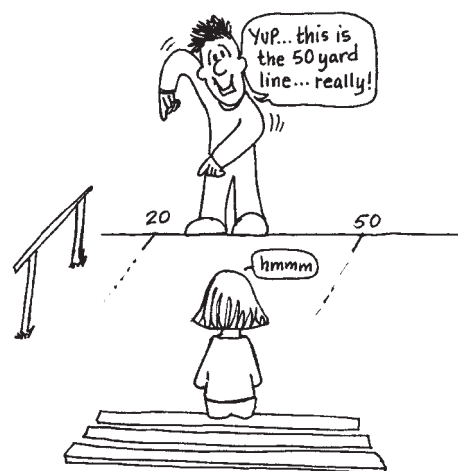
Bambi is afraid of confronting Godzilla. What if he gets worse and starts breathing fire? What if he decides to leave? Interestingly enough, Godzilla begins to calm down when Bambi decides that she has had enough. (Relationships frequently get turned around when one of the partners decides to leave. The crisis point is the time when everything is up in the air. Ironically, it is precisely at that point that the potential for redefining roles exists.)

It takes a lot of assertiveness for Bambi to stand up for herself, but what is really amazing is how often she is reluctant to do so for fear of hurting Godzilla. This is the ultimate form of codependence. She doesn't want to hurt his feelings about how much he hurts her feelings. Of course, Godzilla has feelings, too. But if he were as sensitive as Bambi, he would never have become Godzilla in the first place. It is an incredible paradox that the people who are the least likely to hurt someone else are the most concerned about doing just that. Bambi needs to let go of the illusion that Godzilla experiences things in the same way she does. It may be true that there is a sensitive person inside that fire-breathing dragon, but Bambi doesn't need to worry about hurting someone with skin

three feet thick. (Remember Catch-22 from Chapter 1? The person—Bambi—who never wants to hurt someone else’s feelings is the person who most needs to risk doing just that. The person who never considers anyone’s feelings—Godzilla—is the person most in need of toning it down.)

Another way of understanding the Bambi-Godzilla type of relationship is to use the analogy of an unregulated football game. Some people seem to believe that the 20-yard line is the 50, and they spend most of their lives playing on only one end of the field. They may have the notion that it’s OK for one person to have 80 percent of the turf and the other to have 20 percent. It is difficult to help people change when they have been taken advantage of for some time. They feel that moving play from the 20-yard line to the 30-yard line is the same as going all the way to the other end of the field. Usually, they believe that they must stop well short of the 50-yard line because they don’t want to take up more than their share of space. Fearing that they will become like the people who take more than their share, they make sure to never do that and end up never getting an equal half.

They also think that if they ever moved the game to the other end of the field, however temporarily, it might hurt the other person. They need to learn to look at the



Do you have an even playing field?

game from the grandstand. It may not always be possible to tell what the play was or exactly where the ball went from that perspective, but most people in the stands can tell the 20-yard line from the 50. Sometimes, the task is to realize that the best games are played using the entire field and involve moving back and forth with the give and take of the game.

Case Studies and Student Stories

Katherine grew up in a family where it was commonplace to see her mom being physically or verbally abused. One of her earliest memories of her family was her mother frantically running around the dining room while her stepdad chased her with an axe.

She learned at a very young age to hide her feelings. She survived her rough neighborhood by walking tall and talking tough. In the eighth grade she could arm-wrestle any boy in her class and take him down.

Years passed, and Katherine’s life started a downhill spiral. She married twice, both times to abusive husbands. She began to believe what her second husband said when he told her she was worthless and no one would want her. She endured countless beatings and daily ridicule, and her life was totally focused on trying to please her husband.

On December 27, 1997, Katherine’s life came to an abrupt halt. She came home from a church-related gathering and found her estranged husband lying on her couch. He told her to get out of her own house, even though they had been separated for months. When she said no, he began beating her with an iron rod. As she lay in a pool of blood with thoughts that she might be dying, she strangely remembered a TV show she had seen regarding survival in abusive situations. In the show it stated that a victim should do anything to get the abuser to focus on something else. She asked her husband if she could confess something. For a moment he was so startled that he backed off and sat down. It was then she was able to escape down the stairs.

Doctors at the hospital were astounded that she had been able to run away. She suffered a brain injury, a broken eardrum, and a fractured rotator cuff. She did not walk again unaided for

several months. Adrenaline had compensated for the impairment of all her injuries.

As a result of the attack, Katherine began to see a counselor. Week after week she poured her heart out and began to realize how her childhood had affected her adult life. On her counselor’s advice she entered college to retrain for a profession and to get help for her brain injury.

Going to college was the best thing that could have happened to her. She enrolled in self-help classes and continued to see a college counselor on a regular basis. When her first report card came out, she received all A’s. Something in her spirit began to awaken, and the old tapes began to fade away.

She continued to seek her counselor’s help, and over the weeks she slowly began to believe in herself again. In almost every therapy session, she explored the reasons why she chose abusive relationships. She learned warning signs that would help her make the right choices in the future. Her journey was long and often heart-wrenching, but in the end it was worth it all.

Today Katherine still calls herself a work in progress. She is an independent woman who attends college full time, enjoys the companionship of a best friend, and has developed zero tolerance for abuse.

Changing from a codependent person to an independent person has been the challenge of her life. She attributes her success to having the will to change, and a counselor who supported that will. Her daily mantra is to give back to the world what has been given to her, but to do so when and how she chooses.

Source: Written by D. Juanita Woods.

Internet Dating

Years ago people used to meet potential romantic partners at school, work, church, or recreation centers. Then came the “bar scene,” personal ads, and speed dating. More recently, the Internet has completely changed the number and types of opportunities for people to meet and develop relationships through social networking services like Facebook and online dating services such as eHarmony and Match.com. There are currently more than 1,000 Internet sites in the United States designed for singles to connect with each other. Some estimates state that over 40 percent of single adults in the United States visit these sites each month. The largest demographic group using these sites is higher income, college-educated people, and the fastest growing segment of the Internet dating scene is the 50-and-older population. One survey found that 22 percent of men and 14 percent of women said that finding someone to marry or live with was their most important reason for using dating sites (Kantrowitz, 2006).

There are some advantages to using the Internet as a dating service. It can allow a person time to find out if he or she wants to meet face to face. Clarifying your goals and declaring your agenda up front saves time. For some people, the level of self-disclosure online may actually allow them to establish more intimacy before they initiate a relationship than they could by meeting face to face without prior online communication (Crooks and Baur, 2011). For people who have difficulty relating to others, the anonymity of online relating may allow them to express themselves more easily, which can lead to an improved sense of social connectedness and the formation of strong online attachments. Finally, online communication may contribute to a more genuine relationship by changing the focus to common interests and downplaying the role that physical attractiveness plays in initial attraction; without the influence of visual cues, romance may evolve from emotional intimacy rather than physical attraction.

Although critics are concerned that Internet relationships are superficial, research suggests that online relationships can be just as intimate as face-to-face ones and can be even closer for some. Researchers find that romantic relationships that begin on the Internet seem to be just as stable over two years as relationships formed the traditional way (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

But, the relative advantages of Internet dating are counterbalanced by potential drawbacks. For example,

- **Self-disclosure:** Because the Internet provides anonymity, people can take more risks with self-disclosure. Sometimes this experience can set up a false sense of intimacy, which can create discomfort when meeting the other person: you might feel like they already know too much about you when you are not sure you want to pursue the relationship.
- **People may be untruthful:** People can exaggerate or lie about age, appearance, personal interests, and occupation. Marital status can also be misrepresented.

Interestingly, research has found that 25 percent of online daters admitted to using some deception personally, but when asked about others they felt that 86 percent misrepresented themselves (Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012).

- **Predators:** Unscrupulous people can mask their true intent and get access to personal information.

The Internet has definitely changed the world of relationships, and not just in the initial stages of meeting someone. Individuals can use the Internet to maintain relationships, renew or reconnect, and even break up with others.

The Internet relationship is rapidly evolving, and research will provide a better understanding of the impact of the web on people’s intimate lives in the future. For example, as technology continues to evolve with live video feeds and voice chats, we might find that online relationships begin to look more and more like those in the face-to-face world. But, in the meantime, it is advisable to take things slowly, communicate honestly, and encourage your potential partner to do the same. If you do decide to meet, make sure that it is in a safe public place (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In the United States, the push to obtain the legal protections of civil marriage—such as health insurance, hospital visitation, and social security survivor benefits—for same-sex families has been taking shape since the early 1970s. The movement is supported by an assortment of groups such as the Human Rights Campaign. This effort did not reach widespread national attention until the 1990s after a series of court rulings, legislative votes, and political actions encouraged supporters. The same political and legal events also gave rise to a counter movement to freeze the status quo by legally defining traditional marriage as the marriage of one woman to one man. This would have the effect of excluding non-heterosexual families from the legal protections of marriage.

Advocates of same-sex marriage generally hold that lawful marriage and its benefits should not be denied to same-sex couples, and that such a denial infringes one or more of their rights as American citizens. Critics of same-sex marriage reject this position and generally hold that lawful marriage should be defined as consisting only of a union of one man and one woman, a so-called “traditional marriage,” and that no rights exist that should compel a state to recognize any relationships to the contrary of that definition.

Former president Bill Clinton signed the **Defense of Marriage Act** in 1996, which denied federal recognition of same-sex marriage and gave states the right not to recognize such marriages performed in other states. By 2009, 43 states had passed laws banning same-sex marriage, and 29 of those had adopted constitutions that defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman. But, President Obama

has recently announced that the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional and has instructed the Justice Department to stop defending it in court. It appears that there may well be a reversal of previous trends in the future.

Some people are confused by the title *Defense of Marriage Act*, and wonder how preventing same-sex marriage “defends” heterosexual marriages. It is ironic that Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage was made legal in 2003, has the lowest divorce rate in the United States, at 5.7 divorces per 1000 married people. In contrast, some of the states where there is strong opposition to same-sex marriage have much higher rates: 10.8 divorces per 1000 married people in Kentucky and 12.7 in Arkansas (Goldberg, 2006).

In 2009, 35 percent of the general population in the United States, and 43 percent of U.S. voters under age 30, believed that same-sex marriage should be legal (Pew Research Center, 2009). Support for same-sex marriage has increased and is expected to continue because of younger people’s more accepting attitudes. This includes 58 percent of evangelical Christians between ages 18 and 29 who support either marriage or domestic partnerships for same-sex couples.

Civil Unions

Some people make a distinction between same-sex marriage and civil unions, which would provide same-sex couples some legal rights. More people support civil unions than support marriage for gays and lesbians. The 2009 Pew Research Center poll found that a majority of respondents (53 percent) favored providing same-sex couples with legal arrangements that gave them the same rights as married couples. Some states that have not established gay marriage have approved civil unions or domestic partnership laws that provide some or all the rights, benefits, and responsibilities given to married heterosexual couples.

Controversy over civil marriages for gays and lesbians will play out at the state and national level for years to come. The conflict is about much more than two same-sex people marrying; it is about what kind of country the United States will be: “Is America indeed to be a nation where we all, minorities as well as majorities, popular and unpopular, get to make important choices in our lives, or is it to be a land of liberty and justice for some?” (Wolfson, 2005, p. 18).

There are many who feel that someday all of the controversy around the issue will seem like a historical artifact. After all, we once believed in the notion that women shouldn’t vote and that interracial couples should be prohibited from marrying.

On a lighter note, though, there are comedians who have made fun of the debate. One made the quip, “I don’t know why anyone should be against homosexual marriage. There’s no reason why they shouldn’t be as miserable as heterosexuals.”



WHY MARRIAGES SUCCEED OR FAIL

A Scientific Look at Relationships

For more than 20 years, John Gottman has studied marriage and divorce at the University of Seattle in Washington. In what has become referred to as the “Love Lab” (an apartment where couples stay for a weekend while cameras and various kinds of equipment record their interactions and physiological responses), he has observed, studied, and quantified the type and quality of interactions of married couples. In 1994, he published the book *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* in which he listed the factors that are most likely to lead to divorce. Based on the data he accumulated, he states that within the first five minutes he can predict with over 90 percent accuracy whether a marriage will succeed or end in divorce.

The signs he looks for in predicting divorce are:

1. When couples have a disagreement, they often start with harsh criticism, sarcasm, and/or contempt. Conversations that begin in this manner inevitably end with negative consequences. If things aren’t going well in the first three minutes, it might be just as well to pull the plug and take a breather.
2. Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling, and belligerence often enter the marriage in that order, and when they are present, things usually go in a negative cycle that leads to greater difficulty.
3. When negative interactions reach a certain level or come suddenly, some people feel overwhelmed and flooded by the intensity of the emotions. This frequently leads to being hyper-vigilant, and the person can think only about how to protect himself or herself.
4. One of the consequences of a flooding of emotions is extreme physical responses. When a pounding heart and other stress reactions happen in the middle of a discussion, the ability to process information goes out the window.
5. Repair attempts are efforts the couple makes to deescalate the tension during a touchy discussion. These can be attempts at humor or such simple statements

as, “Let’s take a break” or “I need some time to calm down.” These can be useful in putting on the brakes so that flooding is prevented. However, when these attempts fail, the couple is stuck in their negative feelings together.

6. When a relationship is consumed by negative cycles, it is not just the present and future that are affected, it is also the bad memories of the past. If the marriage is not going well, over time, people tend to rewrite history. They begin to remember things as having been worse than they actually were.

When Gottman first learned how to predict divorce, he thought that he had figured out the key to saving marriages. He has since stated that this approach was misguided!

It now seems that Gottman fell prey to a myth that many marital therapists subscribe to: that learning to communicate and resolve conflicts is the road to romance and a happy marriage. Certainly, communication skills are important, but they alone are not going to solve most marital problems. David Snarch (1996, 2002) echoes this belief by stating that in his experience, doing marital counseling by just teaching people how to communicate better may make things worse. He feels that for some couples, all they do is tell each other what they already know the other person has been thinking about them. Besides, it is one thing to listen as someone makes “I” statements about complaints and dislikes, and another to be the implied target of those statements. “Active listening” may be a worthy goal, but few married couples in the heat of an argument are capable of maintaining that stance.

After studying 650 couples and tracking the fate of their marriages for up to 14 years, Gottman now believes that the key to reviving or divorce-proofing a relationship is not in how they handle disagreements but in how they are with each other when they are not fighting.

In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (Gottman and Silver, 1999), Gottman provides readers with a first-rate practical guide to improving relationships. Stressing that he is one of the few marital advisors who bases his ideas on facts and data rather than opinions, he offers down-to-earth, concrete suggestions and questionnaires in a highly usable workbook format. At the heart of his program is the common-sense belief that the simple truth of happy marriages is that they are based on deep friendship. Friendship fuels the flames of romance, and it also provides the best protection against feeling adversarial toward your spouse. It also increases the likelihood that “repair attempts” will be effective in preventing negativity from escalating out of control. In the strongest marriages, couples share a deep sense of meaning and provide support for each other.

One of the most surprising truths about marriage, paradoxically, is that most marriage arguments can’t be

resolved. Couples spend years trying to change each other, and often this not only doesn’t work, it make things worse. This doesn’t mean that there is nothing you can do if your marriage is constantly in conflict. Instead, it emphasizes the need to understand the bottom-line differences between you and your partner and the importance of learning how to live with those differences while honoring and respecting each other.

Whatever the current state of one’s relationship, Gottman believes that the following concepts can lead to dramatic and positive changes.

1. The first concept is about really getting to know your partner. Many people think they know who they are marrying but find out that the person is different after marriage. It is important to continually update the information about who your partner is, what is important to him or her, what his or her concerns are, and what his or her dreams are for the future.
2. Focus on each others positive qualities. What strengthens and supports a happy marriage is the expression of caring and respect for each other. Many people need to be reminded of how important this is, as well as how to do it.
3. Share your daily experiences. It is important to continually invest in the emotional bank account of the relationship. That is, make sure to stay connected with everyday interactions about even the smallest things. Gottman gives numerous accounts of how love is expressed every day, not in the overblown Hollywood portrayal, but in the little exchanges that keep a couple connected.
4. Learn to share “power” in the relationship. This idea has shown up in numerous newspaper and magazine articles, when it was reported as one of the findings most likely to predict marital success. When each spouse feels that his or her ideas, wants, and needs are important, and also that there is a good chance that those will influence his or her partner, there is a great deal of marital satisfaction.
5. There are perpetual problems and situational problems. Some problems are just not going to go away, and the best thing is to develop a strategy for coping with them. These situations often have to do with religious differences, parenting, in-laws, and need for order and cleanliness. For the problems that are solvable, Gottman suggests using a “soft startup,” learning to make and receive “repair attempts,” practicing soothing yourself and the other, being tolerant of each other’s faults, and compromise. Communicate effectively, avoid criticism, and take breaks if you need to.
6. Some couples have the same argument over and over with practically the same dialogue taking place. It is important to remember that if there is a perpetual problem, the goal should be to move from gridlock to discussion, not necessarily looking for an

Marital “Boot Camps”

If couples only had a way to divorce-proof their marriages. Marriage therapy doesn't always work because most people are on their way to divorce court when they start. Much more effective are the increasingly popular marital “boot camps” that offer basic training in relationship skills. The information is best used when taken as a preventive inoculation before marriage, or during the first year, when motivation to learn marriage-saving skills is high and destructive patterns have not yet formed. In Relationship Enhancement, a nonprofit program, couples work on learning skills under the tutelage of an expert coach. To find out about workshops at locations around the country, call the National Institute of Relationship Enhancement at 1-800-843-6473.

immediate solution. To do that, it is useful to remember that arguments often represent repressed dreams and desires. Get curious about what is underneath the conflict, what are the underlying needs, and what feelings need an outlet for expression.

7. Couples need shared rituals in the relationship. In addition to promoting shared interests, it is important to have shared meaning in life. Creating meaning can incorporate spiritual values as well as shared convictions and goals. Developing long-range plans can assist in creating shared meaning.

Though concluding that no book can solve all marital problems, Gottman believes that his approach will help put couples back on track. Once there, he has some ideas for how to stay on course. He and many other therapists recommend that couples have a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative comments and interactions. After following up on couples that attended workshops, he discovered another magic number: The couples that seemed to make the most progress in continuing to improve their marriage spent five hours or more per week on the relationship, practicing the seven principles they had learned. Gottman has come to refer to that time as the “Magic Five Hours.”

Other Help in Making Marriage Last

Harville Hendrix, director of the Institute for Relationship Therapy and author of *Getting the Love You Want* (1990), is another of the many counselors and therapists who have written books offering advice for people who want to improve their relationship. His work has stood the test of time, and he continues to teach, counsel, and train others

“A good marriage is not so much finding the right person as being the right person.”

Scott Rowley

on the basis of this book. There are recurring themes and topics regarding what constitutes a good marriage. This is what Hendrix and other experts in the field say are the important factors in a lasting relationship:

- **Self-knowledge and high self-esteem are vital:** The better you know yourself and your needs in a relationship, the more likely you are to be satisfied with the relationship. Love and accept yourself; define your own values and convictions.
- **Communication means learning to listen:** Be honest with yourself and your partner. Express your wants rather than just giving criticism. Conflict can be useful when interpreted as “growth trying to happen.”
- **Spend time together and apart:** The trick is finding the balance. Have daily routines that allow for time together and time for play, as well as time to pursue separate interests. Have friends outside the relationship, and remember that no one person can meet all your needs.
- **Satisfying sex can be learned:** Only your partner can tell you the most important things you need to know about your partner. So relate to each other rather than perform for each other. Ask questions and communicate your wishes. Schedule time for sex and share your fantasies. Remember that sex and romance aren't just what happens in bed; it is the touch and contact throughout the day.
- **Learn to fight fair:** Don't sweep things under the carpet in hopes that they will go away. When you bring up problems, don't hit below the belt. Make sure that the problem you're fighting about is the real one. Deal with your anger before it builds into resentment. Most of all, learn to tell the difference between reacting and responding.

It is also important to remember that a relationship can't satisfy all of your needs. There are some things marriage can do and some it cannot. On some level, all of us want to be known and understood completely. We cling to the ideal that we can be connected and intimate and have someone take care of us all the time. But only in infancy is that need realized.

Marriage Requires Healthy Differentiation

One of the themes in the above suggestions for making marriage last is the ability to differentiate from the other person—each person has his or her own identity and can stand by himself or herself. This is the opposite of codependency.

“Expect what is reasonable in others, not what is perfect.”

Anonymous

Lasting Relationships

A review of research on marital satisfaction reported that successful marriages that remain strong over the long haul often exhibit certain characteristics (Karney and Bradbury, 1995):

- Parents of both spouses had successful marriages
- Spouses have similar attitudes, interests, and personality styles
- Both are satisfied with their sexual relations
- The couple has an adequate and steady income
- The woman was not pregnant when the couple married

David Snarch (1996), in his book *Passionate Marriage*, says that marriage is a “people growing process” that requires each partner to develop and maintain his or her own integrity if they are going to have a truly intimate relationship. And, Snarch believes that integrity and integration are one and the same. Integration is the process of self-acceptance that comes when *who you are* and *who you think you should be* become one. It is necessary to have a developed sense of personal integration in order to be able to differentiate from the other person. Snarch gives numerous examples of the paradox that closeness is possible only when each person can stand alone.

Too often people confuse love with fusion, but healthy relationships allow for each partner to have his or her own identity. Differentiation requires balancing the two life forces: the drive for individuality and the drive for togetherness. In an undifferentiated relationship, your spouse can always force you to choose between keeping your integrity and staying married, between “holding on to yourself” and holding on to your partner.

Snarch (1996, p. 67) states:

People screaming, “I got to be me!” “Don’t fence me in!” and “I need space!” are not highly differentiated. Just the opposite. They are fearful of “disappearing” in a relationship and do things to avoid their partner’s emotional engulfment. Some create distance; others keep their relationship in constant upheaval. Declaring your boundaries is an important early step in the differentiation process, but it’s done in the context of staying in relationship (that is, close proximity and restricted space). This is quite different from poorly differentiated people who attempt to always “keep the door open” and who bolt when increasing importance of the relationship makes them feel like they’re being locked up. The process of holding on to your sense of self in an intense emotional relationship is what develops differentiation.

This should make the paradox of differentiation clear. It allows us to set ourselves apart from others while opening up the space for true togetherness. It’s about getting closer and more distinct rather than more distant.

MARRIAGE MYTHS

It’s easy to view marriage as a panacea for our problems, to expect someone else to make life better for us. It doesn’t work that way. Let’s look at a few marital myths:

- ***I have some doubts about this, but it’s probably just wedding jitters:*** It’s scary to pay attention to that nagging little voice inside that raises doubts about what we’re doing. So most of us just ignore it, dismissing what our hunch is telling us. And we go ahead and marry, shoving those doubts to the back of our minds as we will shove our wedding shoes to the rear of the closet. Invariably, those doubts—those truths—return to haunt us.
- ***When I’m married, my problems will be solved:*** Ever heard the saying, “Wherever you go, there you are?” It means that we always take ourselves—our attitudes, behaviors, values—into every circumstance. There’s nothing magic about a circumstance (or another person) that automatically changes who we essentially are. We don’t lose our problems in marriage. In fact, we get a whole new set: dealing with in-laws, compromising, coordinating two schedules, running a home, becoming parents. Problems don’t disappear; they merely take on a new face.
- ***After the wedding, he or she will change:*** Not true. People don’t change unless they have a reason to, usually when they are prompted by emotional pain. If you don’t like what your partner is now, don’t expect him or her to be any different after marriage. This is especially true of violence; abusiveness accelerates if it’s tolerated. If we permit someone to insult us, boss us around, or physically hurt us, we’re teaching that person that it is all right.
- ***Being married makes me an official grown-up:*** Young couples are susceptible to this trap. We may believe that if we have all the trappings of a home and family, we are adults and everything is fine. We may work hard to decorate our homes just so, stage the perfect Christmas, or throw a barbecue with the man grilling the burgers. If it looks right, it must be right. Although the trappings can be comforting, we have to be careful not to rely on them. Just because a marriage looks good doesn’t mean it is good. If we spend more time basting the turkey or edging the lawn than we do talking with our mates, we eventually will be in trouble.
- ***If my spouse really loves me, he or she will know what I want without having to ask:*** Marriage doesn’t make us mind-readers. When people are extra-attentive during courtship, it may seem that they do anticipate our needs and read our minds. As we settle into a routine, that second sense usually diminishes. That doesn’t mean we aren’t loved. It means we have to be clear about saying what we want, whether we’re planning a menu or making love. Expecting a partner to know what we want

(when sometimes even we don't know) only sets us both up for failure. We feel resentful and spouses feel like they have failed us. We do our relationship a favor by speaking up.

- ***If problems arise, we'll just kiss and make up:*** When we try to make up without resolving a dispute, our pucker is likely to be powered by fear—fear that our partner will withdraw, leave, stop loving us. Women, especially, find it difficult to make love when they're not feeling emotionally close. To go ahead and do so may make us feel used, alienating us even further. Sex while feuding is premature, but touch is healing. Try holding hands while discussing a problem. This can keep us physically connected and remind the other of our love—even though we're not feeling particularly loving. Some couples find that lovemaking during or just after a quarrel is especially exciting. Some may even pick a fight for the adrenaline rush. Marriage counselors caution that this isn't a healthy pattern. It can be a cover-up for unresolved problems in the relationship.
- ***I'll always have someone to do things with; I'll never be lonely again:*** Khalil Gibran said, "Let there be spaces in your togetherness." Marriage doesn't automatically confer the same interests and enthusiasms or even concurrent moods on husband and wife. To expect that it will is the height of naiveté and sets us up for disappointment. When we're dating, we often go along with what the other person wants to do because we're so anxious to please and to spend time together. When we live together, that wears off, and we're less likely to go along just for the heck of it. Instead of expecting a mate to want to do whatever we want, when we want, it makes more sense to invite a friend or family member to join us at the parade or for a day of shopping or fishing. If we cajole our mate into going along, he or she will do so reluctantly and we won't have a good time. If we guilt-trip a spouse for not going, resentments build on both sides.

DIVORCE AND ENDING RELATIONSHIPS

Causes of Divorce

There are a number of reasons that people give for getting divorced, but part of the problem in evaluating that information is that there is often a discrepancy between the actual causes and peoples' perceptions of the causes, which are after-the-fact reconstructions. Further, women are more likely to report that their husbands' problematic behavior led to the divorce, whereas men are more likely to say that they did not know what caused the divorce (Amato and Previti, 2003).

In a randomly selected national sample of divorced people, the respondents reported infidelity as the most common reason for the separation (Amato and Previti,

2003). Other sources cast doubt on that, but it may be a case of the chicken and the egg. Is it the problems in the relationship that lead to the increased possibility of an affair, or an affair that then contributes to the problems that result in divorce? There are other factors that are also common reasons that individuals cite as cause for divorce. These include lack of communication, incompatibility, personality clashes, and generally growing apart. All of these difficulties could also contribute to a person in a marriage having an affair.

If a divorce is going to occur, it usually takes place between the fifth and tenth year of marriage (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000). This may have given rise to the term "seven-year itch." Younger people who tend to divorce during this period often experience heated emotions that burn out the marriage. In contrast, older couples who divorce in mid-life tend to be cool and distant and suppress emotions. But, however or whenever a breakup occurs, seldom is it because of one incident. For the most part, divorce is a process that starts and continues for awhile before the actual breakup (Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012).

Divorce Rates

There was a time during the 1950s when the divorce rate was about 25 percent. It increased to about 50 percent in the late 1970s. From 1977 on, there has been a slight decline that appears to be continuing. That trend is supported by a study that indicated that 43 percent of first marriages are predicted to end within 15 years (Kalb, 2006).

There could be several reasons for the decreasing divorce rate. First, couples who have difficulties in their marriage are increasingly attempting to create a better relationship rather than heading for divorce court. We seem to realize that divorce itself has clear disadvantages. A second reason that the divorce rate is going down is that people are waiting longer to get married. People who marry in their teens are more than twice as likely to divorce than those who wed in their 20s. People who marry after age 30 have even lower divorce rates.

Effects of Divorce

Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer (2012) present some interesting information about the effects of divorce. The loss a person feels during and after a divorce or the breakup of a meaningful relationship is often comparable to the loss experienced when a loved one dies. In both cases one undergoes a grieving process, even though there really aren't any accepted rituals for dealing with the end of a relationship. Some people report that dealing with divorce is even more difficult than dealing with death in that there isn't the finality of an ending. Some divorces drag on for years, and many couples need to communicate and try to cooperate around issues of child rearing.

Initially there is a sense of shock followed by a sense of disorientation. Strong emotions may surface unexpectedly. Loneliness is common and it is important to reach out to others for support during the time after the ending of a relationship. It may take several months, but a feeling of relief and acceptance may eventually develop.

Even those who initiate the divorce face difficulties and challenges during the process. Both divorced men and women complain of anxiety about the impending unknowns, diminished self-esteem, and concerns about forming new relationships. Both individuals involved in the breakup of a relationship are at risk for psychological and physical difficulties. Like other stressors discussed in chapter 4, marital separation can lead to reduced functioning of the immune system, leaving those involved vulnerable to disease and infection.

The specific stressors associated with divorce also depend on whether the divorced parent has custody of the children. Custodial parents often feel the burden of being overloaded and overworked while trying to put their lives back together. Non-custodial parents may feel a sense of isolation and complain about alienation from their children.

Research shows that people raised by divorced parents have more negative attitudes about marriage and are themselves more likely to divorce than are people raised by parents who remain married. However, parents who stay together in unhappy marriages may not help prevent their children from divorcing a future spouse. Young adults who believe that their parents should end their marriage are more likely to have positive views of divorce, even when their parents have negative views (Kapinus, 2005).

Judith Wallerstein (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989) has done extensive work in the field of the effects of divorce on children and found that half of them ended up being angry and upset. She characterized them as often being anxious, worried, or self-deprecating. In follow-up studies done after the original 1971 work, she declared that even 25 years after their parents' divorce, a majority of subjects were viewed as troubled adults who found it hard to maintain stable relationships. But, there are numerous other researchers who have stated that her findings were overly pessimistic. While some reviewers of her work pointed out that there were flaws in the design of the study, others pointed out that she is part of a conservative religious movement that is opposed to divorce and her conclusions may be shaped in part by a political agenda.

The results of another long-running study by E. Mavis Hetherington (2003) suggest that the outcomes of divorce may not be so drastic. According to Hetherington, divorce can be traumatic for children, but a substantial majority adjust reasonably well after two to three years. She believes that only about 25 percent show serious emotional problems as adults, as compared to 10 percent in the control group of the study. And, other research has suggested that there are some positive outcomes of divorce.

Children have the opportunity for growth in the areas of life management skills, developing realistic expectations, and increased empathy.

Overall, the weight of evidence seems to indicate that divorce does tend to have harmful effects on many children, but it can be beneficial for children if their parents' relationship was dominated by conflict. However, that outcome is based on the assumption that the parents' divorce brings their bickering to an end—which it may not if the couple continue to argue and fight over the children.

It is reasonable to conclude that divorces have highly varied effects on children that depend on a number of complex interacting factors. Many researchers have become increasingly wary about public discussions of divorce, which treat divorce as though it is one unifying experience with similar results or outcomes for the children involved.

Adjustment and Coping with Separation

Hetherington and Kelley (2002) identified several factors that enable adults to cope more effectively with the aftermath of divorce:

- **Social maturity:** Socially mature adults found ways to control the anxiety, depression, and fear that often come with divorce so that these emotions didn't interfere with their decision making. Because they were adaptable, socially mature divorced adults avoided turning other situations into problems or making the current ones worse.
- **Autonomy:** Divorced adults who were comfortable being alone found that being single was easier to cope with. Some of the most independent women found that it was a positive experience to be free from joint decision making.
- **Internal locus of control:** Feelings of helplessness might be common after divorce, but adults who believe that they are in control of their lives and the world around them adjust better.
- **Work:** For many people work provides a sense of security. Some men, having lost home and family, poured themselves into their work in an effort to find stability.
- **Social support:** Transitional figures are important in helping adults adjust to post-divorce life. They are the friends who act as counselor and comforter, lending advice and support. These figures can also help with the practical matters of finding a place to live, taking care of children, and making new social contacts.
- **New intimate relationship:** The most powerful factor in reducing stress was a new intimate relationship. Difficult as it may be after divorce, being willing to dive back in to the pool is beneficial when the time is right.

Adjustment Strategies for Letting Go of an Unhealthy Relationship

1. *Ask yourself “what are the feelings that make it difficult to let go of the relationship?”* While friends may be able to offer insights or observations about what was negative about the relationship, only you know what needs were being met by being with someone who wasn't good for you.
2. *Foster activities that enhance your self-esteem and independence.* Ideally, a relationship should make you feel better about yourself, but if you have been in a destructive relationship it is important to do things that make you feel better . . . even if it means doing them by yourself.
3. *Become more aware of self-defeating thoughts that prevented you from leaving in the first place.* Practice thought stopping by actually telling yourself “Stop” when you notice negative old thought patterns.
4. Get involved with someone else only when you are emotionally ready.

Source: Adapted from Santrock, 2006

Hetherington also suggested several adjustment strategies:

- **Look at divorce as an opportunity for personal growth and build more fulfilling relationships:** Consider a time in your life when something else bad happened, but years later when you were doing much better you could look back on it with

a different perspective. Some people remind themselves that if it hadn't been for that situation they may not have made the decisions that brought them to the better place in the present.

- **Think carefully about your choices:** Make sure that you don't just react, or over-react, to the situation. During times of stress it is important to not make snap decisions. Talk things over with a friend to get another viewpoint.
- **Focus more on the future than the past:** Many people spend more time ruminating about the past than thinking about and planning for the future. If you find yourself reliving the divorce for the tenth time, you might want to think about the opportunity to make things different from the old experience.
- **Capitalize on the strengths and the resources that are available to you:** Many things will change after divorce and it is time to take stock of what you have and already know. You may find yourself coming back to skills that you had before but had let go of.
- **Don't expect to be successful and happy in everything that you do:** Life isn't perfect for anyone and no one gets out of this life unscathed.
- **You are never trapped by one pathway:** There are so many ways to live life, and the abundance of varied lifestyles can serve as an example of how you can find a new one that fits with your life.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- The importance of friendships is increasing in a society in which marital partners may come and go and family members may live far away. Friendships, just as all relationships, need to be nurtured and tended to.
- Familiarity and similarity are more important in finding a mate than finding someone who seems to fill in what's missing in us.
- People have different ways of feeling loved. All are legitimate. It's important to express love in the way that your partner prefers.
- In most cases you have a better chance of finding long-lasting happiness by working on the relationship you're in than trying to find a new relationship, but there are exceptions.
- In most cases the negative effects of divorce on children outweigh the positive effects, but there are exceptions.
- There are potential advantages and disadvantages to Internet dating. The jury is still out.

Chapter Review

FRIENDSHIPS

The ability to make friends is an important aspect of social development that most people learn while growing up. There is evidence that the importance of friendships is increasing in a society in which marital partners may come and go and family members may live anywhere in the country. We all need people we can connect with and depend on. Women tend to have more close friends than do men, and men often state that their best friend is a woman. Friendships, just as any relationship, need to be nurtured and tended to.

THEORIES OF ATTRACTION

There are many reasons why we are attracted to certain people. Some of the factors affecting attraction are chemistry, proximity, similarity, reciprocity, and physical attractiveness. Some people adopt a “birds-of-a-feather” approach to partner selection; others subscribe to the “opposites attract” theory. Similarity results in better relationships. All of us are influenced to some degree by our parents and peers when it comes to mate selection.

TYPES OF LOVE

There are a number of different aspects to a loving relationship. Sternberg explores some of the various ways in which people can experience love in a relationship—intimacy, passion, and commitment. There are various ways in which these elements combine and interact in a relationship.

EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE AND THE NEW GOLDEN RULE

People have different ways of demonstrating affection—words, time, gifts, acts of service, and physical contact. It's important to express love in the way that your partner wants—the new golden rule: do unto others as they would have done unto them.

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

From early childhood people learn about closeness and intimacy. Attachment style of a person—secure, avoidant, or resistant/ambivalent—depends on how responsive the caregiver was to the person when he or she was an infant. The degree of connection with parents has implications for later relationships. Trust, caring, and the ability to give are all connected with the pattern of attachment learned through different responses from parents.

BRICKS AND BALLOONS

Sometimes we choose partners that seem to fill in something that is missing in us. Many problems can arise from this. It's better if each partner can act as a brick or a balloon as the need arises. At its extreme, choosing a partner who fills in something missing in us can lead to a codependent relationship.

THE DANCE OF INTIMACY

Many people simultaneously want and avoid intimacy. Many of the on-again-off-again cycles that couples go through are due to their need to establish the amount of distance that is within their comfort zone. The pursuer and the pursued have more in common than most people realize, and often, they will reverse roles.

CODEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

When you look for what is missing in yourself in someone else, you set up the basis for a restrictive relationship. Two halves looking for completion do not compensate for what is lacking, and don't make a whole relationship. When one part of a couple decides to change and become more well-rounded, the other may not respond enthusiastically. Many people want to maintain their imbalanced relationship because it provides some benefits to them. People often re-create their family of origin in their

marriages. Marriage issues can be an attempt to resolve conflicts from the family of origin.

INTERNET DATING

There are potential advantages and disadvantages to building intimate relationships online. The jury is still out on whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

There is considerable controversy in the country about who should be allowed the rights of legally sanctioned marriage. Some feel that allowing gays to officially marry would change the nature and status of the institution. Others believe that civil unions are one manner in which civil rights issues can be addressed. There will be increasing legal issues as same-sex marriages conducted in states and countries where they are legal seek to be recognized in places where they are not legal.

WHY MARRIAGES SUCCEED OR FAIL

John Gottman spent many years studying how couples interact. Originally focused on how to predict which marriages would fail depending on their style of conflict resolution, he has recently focused on how to help marriages succeed. Although communication is still important, he emphasizes that it is more important to develop a relationship based on respect and friendship.

Much of the information about how to make marriage work has to do with what not to do. Most of the important concepts about what helps are common knowledge—the trick is remembering and applying them. Marriages improve and last when you communicate, have a good self-concept, fight fair, allow for differences, don't try to force changes, keep infatuation alive, and treat your marriage as you would treat a friendship.

MARRIAGE MYTHS

There are a vast number of beliefs and expectations that influence an intimate relationship. Expectations for marriage and for a partner have changed in recent times. Sorting out false or unrealistic expectations can have positive results in a marriage.

DIVORCE

The divorce rate is declining. There may be several reasons why: people are getting married later, people realize that they have a better chance at happiness if they work on their current relationship rather than try a new one, and the negative effects of divorce on children, in many cases, outweigh the advantages. Of course, there are exceptions in cases of abuse. There are ways to cope with divorce.

Website Resources

National Institute of Relationship Enhancement
<http://www.nire.org/>

Whole Family: Extensive information on marriage and the family
<http://www.wholefamily.com>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY?

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your response to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. Are you experiencing an increase in the importance of friendship and a decrease in the importance of family? Describe your experiences and the impact they have had on you.

2. What characteristics do you look for in a mate; what attracts you? What would you do differently in the future?
3. Where could you use the information about different *Love Languages*? What is important to you? How do you express love to someone who receives it in a different style?
4. What did you learn from the information on attachment? What style do you think you had? How has that influenced your behavior in relationships?
5. What has been your experience with *bricks and balloons*? What might you do differently next time?
6. What concerns you about intimacy? Have you ever played “tag” in a relationship? What is your closeness comfort zone, and how do you try to maintain it?
7. Have you been involved in or seen a relationship where there was codependency or a considerable power differential? What have you learned from the chapter that would be useful in changing or avoiding that type of situation?
8. What is your experience with Internet dating? How truthful were you? How truthful was the other person? Did you experience any of the advantages and disadvantages described in the chapter? What might you do differently next time?
9. What are your reactions to the section on same-sex marriage? Where did your values and beliefs originate?
10. What have you learned about making marriage last? What is it that you want to avoid doing, and what is it that you want to make sure that you do more of?
11. What has been your experience with divorce? How did it reflect the information in this chapter in terms of causes and effects?

8

HUMAN SEXUALITY

The initial stories that students have when they come into my office to talk about sex are almost amusing. One young woman, who had just turned twenty, told me that her boyfriend might be having a problem and wanted to know if she could talk with me on his behalf since he wasn't enrolled in the Human Sexuality class that she was in. I asked what the problem was and she said that he wanted to know if there was anything wrong if he was having difficulty in having an orgasm. That was a fairly broad question with a wide range of possible answers, and it begged for greater clarification. As gently and sensitively as possible, I began to ask questions that would help in making some kind of informed response. As the story unfolded and I got greater details of the situation, I found out the following:

She and her boyfriend of six months had recently been separated when he transferred to another college out of state. He was home on vacation for spring break and they seemed to be making up for lost time. The boyfriend had a good buddy who had lent them the use of his apartment. Uninhibited by time or place they had apparently been trying to break some Guinness Book of Records entry for the number of times college students could have intercourse in a given period. They had engaged in sex a number of times already that day when the boyfriend decided that he once again needed to demonstrate his love and affection. According to the young woman, they had been having intercourse for more than a half hour when she noticed that she was starting to bleed from vaginal irritation. At this point she asked her boyfriend if they could stop. He reluctantly agreed, but let it be known that he was concerned about not being able to have another orgasm because he thought it was a reflection on him.

It was at this point that I began to ask some rather pointed questions to be able to put things in perspective. It seems that they had not only been having sex multiple times that day, but had also done so the previous few days. When I found out that they had been having sex multiple times a day for a number of days in a row it seemed appropriate to shift the focus of enquiry. Had she been enjoying this activity? What did she think would happen if she asked to take a break? What did she think her boyfriend was trying to accomplish with the constant demonstration of his ardor?

The focus of what constituted the problem shifted to being more about how long it took for her to tell him that what they were doing wasn't pleasant anymore, rather than on his concern for having an "adequate" amount of orgasms or his inability to ejaculate after an extended period of intercourse. It seems as though she didn't want to risk his disapproval, didn't want to disappoint him, and thought perhaps it had something to do with her that he wasn't able to have another orgasm. I explained the concept of refractory period so that she could pass it on to her boyfriend. While there may be a wide range in what is considered normal, after a male has ejaculated, there is a period of time when no amount of stimulation is going to produce another orgasm. And, in what might have been an overly simplified metaphor, I told her that it isn't like the old westerns where the cowboy could shoot all day without reloading.

I strongly suggested to her that she let her boyfriend know that he didn't need to be attempting any records for her sake. And that there was nothing wrong other than that he needed to understand a little more about the physiology of sex. In essence, he needed to give it a rest, literally, and maybe even consider what it was he was trying to accomplish. She, on the other hand, needed to think about why she was so willing to engage in behavior that wasn't pleasant for her for such an extended period. I also recommended that she think about taking a human relations course or look into some kind of assertiveness classes, possibly ones offered on campus.

After she left, I began asking myself what would be influencing these young people to be going to such extremes of behavior that were so obviously beyond the usual expression of adolescent libido . . . even for college students. It seemed as though each of them was holding themselves up to some unusually high standard while questioning themselves as to their level of sexual functioning. It took only a minute for me to answer my own question. What else would have people believing that everyone has to act like a porn star than our good old friend, the Internet.

Discussion Why talk about human sexuality? Mainly because there are still people who don't think it's necessary to talk about it! There are even some who think that sex has nothing to do with human relations. Yet, the need for information is becoming more important as the realm of sexuality becomes increasingly complex. Although medical and anatomical information about sexuality is important, it is necessary to limit the scope of content to fit the context of this course. Therefore, I emphasize the part that sexuality plays in social and personal interaction, where sexual values and beliefs come from, the influence of the Internet, and the impact of sexuality on our emotions and behavior.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 8

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. From the section on *Beliefs and Values*, what are the five sources that influence children's attitudes about sex? Which influence is first?
2. From the section on *Peer Influences*, how are males and females influenced by the culture of high school?
3. In regard to parental influence, what does what they don't say speak as loud as what they do say mean?
4. What are the findings concerning *abstinence-only* education and what are the five key topics that should be included in good sex education?
5. Describe four potential problems stemming from readily available pornography on the Internet.
6. What constitutes *sexual harassment* and what are the seven guidelines for action if you believe you've been a victim of sexual harassment?
7. What are five ways you can protect yourself against rape?
8. What are the common difficulties and life patterns for adults who were sexually abused as children?

9. Describe the two sides of the false memory debate.
10. Define *sexual orientation* and the components of Kinsey's continuum of sexual orientation.
11. Define *homophobia*. Describe the current debate on the development of sexual orientation.
12. In the section on *Sexual Orientation and Mental Health*, describe five myths about sexual orientation.
13. What are the four most common STIs among Americans?
14. What is AIDS? What is the difference between HIV and AIDS? What is the effect of AIDS on your body?
15. What are five methods for preventing AIDS?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY

A visitor to the United States today might think that we have a completely open society with regard to sexuality. We are surrounded and bombarded by sexual information and materials. Sexual behavior and relationships are portrayed in the news, in magazines, on television, and on the Internet. There is plenty of explicit pornography, the largest single category of sites visited on the Internet. But, if we are so open about sexuality, why does the United States remain, among Western industrialized nations, the nation with the highest rate of teen pregnancy (Crooks and Baur, 2011)? Consider the following:

1. There are myths and beliefs that have a strong influence on how we act with one another: Some

people believe that all touch is sexual, which limits people's ability to express caring, concern, or friendship. Others believe that sex equals intimacy, which is a complex issue in relationships. Actually, sex can be used at times to avoid real closeness and intimacy. Both of these beliefs are examples of ideas and values learned while growing up.

2. We are bombarded by conflicting messages in our society: Magazines and newspapers warn of the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Yet the media—from movies to MTV to the Internet and YouTube—continue to reflect and support the notion that sex sells. Apparently, we all are expected to be great lovers, constantly involved in erotic relationships, living the carefree "Hollywood dream." In reality, people have as many concerns and fears about sexuality as ever.

3. There is considerable interest in the subject of sexuality: This interest is evidenced by the number of talk shows, reality TV shows, magazines, and Internet sites that discuss sexual topics. Academic institutions might do well to provide the opportunity to discuss information about sexuality to the same extent that the media does, for although there is increased support and awareness of sex education in schools, it would appear that much is being left unsaid in educational settings.

4. Level of teenage pregnancy: Even with the availability of contraception, as well as all the information available about it, the teenage pregnancy rate is still alarming; the apparent lack of impact of sex education in this area needs to be examined. Young people need more resources for information and more people with whom they can talk about sex. Radio talk shows and Internet sites may have qualified people answering questions, but more comprehensive education is needed given the abstinence-only approach that has only recently changed.

5. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS): A lack of forthright discussion undoubtedly contributed to the panicked reaction to AIDS when this disease was first reported in the newspapers in the early 1980s. Reluctant to describe specific sexual behaviors such as anal intercourse, the media frequently used such euphemisms as “exchange of bodily fluids” to describe how the disease was transmitted. This use of euphemisms reinforced the mistaken idea that AIDS could be contracted by any physical contact and led to unfair and unnecessary discrimination against people suffering from the disease.

Because sexuality as a topic incorporates diverse elements of philosophy, psychology, politics, and the law, it is important to talk about sexuality and personal values as they relate to those topics. We need to explore where our beliefs come from, why we think and believe the way we do, and how all these elements affect us in our interactions with others.

INFLUENCES ON BELIEFS AND VALUES ABOUT SEX

Peer Influences

Most parents feel responsible for imparting sexual information and values to their children. Their hope is that they are the primary source of information, followed by school educational programs, and only then followed by peers and the media. Ironically, it is much more likely to be the other way around. Studies have consistently shown that peers are the main source of sexual information for both genders. For example, when asked where teenagers today learn about sex, five of six (83 percent) said they had learned from friends (Rathus, Nevid, and Fichner-Rathus, 2000). By the time parents and schools get around to it, most kids have already been talking to one other about sex for a couple of years. As soon as children

start school, one of their top priorities is telling dirty jokes during recess. There are a number of variations on the story of how “Daddy put his gun in Mommy’s holster,” or “The train went into the long tunnel.” These kids are doing a reality check with one another. In effect, they are saying, “You know all that stuff about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy? Well, let me tell you about the Stork.” They are saying to each other, “I know how babies got here; do you?”

The importance of peer influence continues through adolescence. The values and beliefs conveyed in adolescent circles rarely help develop positive attitudes about the opposite sex. The residual effects are evident in some of the problems adults have many years later.

One of these problems is the double standard regarding sexual behavior. This is reflected in the names for girls and boys who are sexually active in high school. Some terms that are used for girls who are sexually active include *slut* (top of the list for at least 30 or 40 years), *whore*, *sleaze*, *nympho*, *easy*, and *cheap*. These words are all negative and derogatory, and are used as much by girls as by boys. The terms used for girls who don’t engage in sex aren’t much better. They include *prude*, *frigid*, *bitch*, *dyke*, *goody-goody*, and *virgin*.

For many females in our society, this creates a double bind regarding sexuality: “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.” About the only time that a high school girl can be sexually active with impunity is when she is in love or going steady. If she has been going out with a guy for two or three years, most of the couple’s peers will assume that they are having sex, but few will give her a bad time about it.

This double bind frequently contributes to women’s confused feelings about their sexual choices and behavior later in life. As of 2007, the average age of first sexual intercourse for females was 17.4 (Kinsey Institute, accessed June 2011), and the median age of marriage was 26 (Pew Research Center, 2008). If a woman is single for nine years and has no intention of getting married during that time, how does she reconcile having her sexual needs met with the belief that to be sexually active, she must be in love? Many women are confused by the time they want to marry because every time they’ve had sex for the past nine years they have had to convince themselves, “This must be the real thing. I’m in love, and I’m probably going to get married.”

Now let’s talk about the terms used in reference to guys who are sexually active. Sexual stereotypes are hard on them, too, even though the terms used tend to be complimentary: *stud* (top of the list), *player*, *macho*, *stallion*, *user*, *bunk*, *playboy*, and *gigolo*. (Some of these terms may appear to be derogatory, but they are actually all positive. A young male in our society usually doesn’t care which name is used as long as it refers to his sexual knowledge or abilities.) Contrast that list with the ones for boys who aren’t sexually active or at least expressing an interest in being so: *fag*, *homo*, *wimp*, *mamma’s boy*, *queer*, and

*“Women need a reason to have sex.
Men just need a place.”*

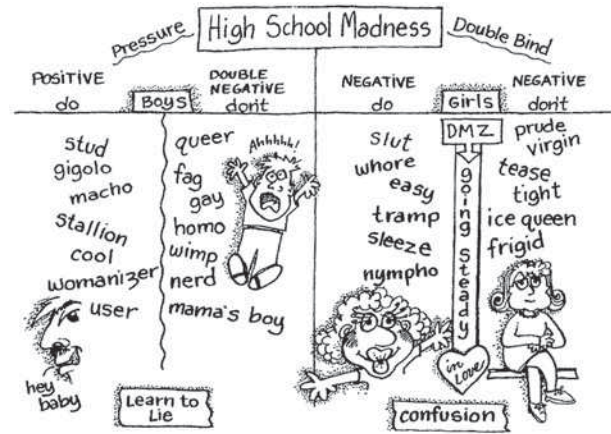
Billy Crystal

nerd. It is particularly interesting that a boy’s sexual orientation is often called into question if he does not express interest in sex. In this way, heterosexual males may often feel pressure to show great interest in having sex in order to “prove” their sexuality.

Although girls can almost always get some support from friends, parents, and teachers for a decision not to be sexually active, boys very seldom get the same response to saying that they aren’t yet interested in sexual relations. Consequently, guys learn fairly early to lie about it if they aren’t doing it. There doesn’t seem to be any demilitarized zone (DMZ) for them. They are on either one side of the line or the other—a stud or a wimp.

When I was growing up, if a guy didn’t want to talk about a girl or what he had done on a date, other guys automatically assumed he had done something. Then his so-called friends would make up stories and rumors about what he had “gotten off her.” The message was, “Either you make up stories, or we will.” This often had unfortunate outcomes for both parties involved in the stories that were circulated.

Thus, the high school culture seems to require adopting some unfortunate perceptions about sex for both males and females. Boys feel a great deal of pressure about their sexual performance and knowledge and often learn to exaggerate to bolster their self-image. Girls must deal with the double bind and double standards that often



leave them feeling somewhat crazy or confused (Crooks and Baur, 2011). These typical high school attitudes, combined with the absence of any information or discussion regarding these topics from adults, increases the impact and lasting effect of early training. As adults, some gain insight into the fallacies of these early notions, but many never do.

It’s obvious that children and adolescents need to have better information about sex earlier. Yet other early sources of information—parents, school programs, the media, and the Internet—don’t help much either.

Parental Influences

When asked when their parents first talked with them about sex, it is not uncommon to have nearly half my students reply, “Never,” and the other half say at the age of 11–12 (several years after children begin talking about it with their peers). It seems that the parents from the liberated generation of the 1960s have been having as hard a time as previous generations discussing sex with their children.

Many students also tell me that, as children, they didn’t think their parents had sex; they thought of their parents as asexual. One student recalled that when he was young, he knew how babies were made, but decided that he must have been adopted because he simply couldn’t imagine his parents doing that. Why do we have difficulty imagining our parents as sexual beings? It’s confusing, to say the least, for example, if parents tell children that sex is a normal, healthy aspect of life, but never touch each other in an affectionate way in front of the kids. What parents don’t say about sex says a lot!

Parents might be reluctant to discuss sex with their children for fear that it will encourage early sexual experimentation. However, there is no clear evidence that sex education in the home contributes to an increase in sexual activity. Actually, positive parent-adolescent interaction about sex has been linked to a decrease in STIs, more consistent use of birth control, and a decrease in teenage pregnancy (Lehr et al., 2005).

Thought Question 8.1

How were you affected by peer pressure in high school? How were your values and beliefs influenced? How have you changed since then, and what has made the difference?

Children need accurate information about sex—including not only the physical actions, but also the emotional and social ramifications—*before* physiological changes occur. Studies indicate that the average onset of a girl’s menstrual cycle in the United States is age 12.4 (Crooks and Baur, 2011). By 13.75 years of age, 90 percent are menstruating. But, 10 percent of U.S. girls are starting their periods by 11.1 years. If one of those early-maturing girls starts her period in the fourth grade, how long is it before her class knows? How long before the whole school knows about it? What happens when the school doesn’t have a formal program dealing with the topic until the sixth grade? Children are going to be sharing information, which may or may not be accurate, with each other before the school system begins to provide sex education.

Daily life offers many opportunities to talk about sex: the birth of a second child, the family pet having offspring, seeing animals mating, depictions on TV, and many others. If children feel that sexuality is a part of life and it is discussed on a level appropriate for their age, they will be more likely to ask questions about what they need to know.

Parents can teach their children healthy attitudes about sexuality by what they say and don’t say and what they do and don’t do. Whether parents talk with children about sex or not, they are still imparting beliefs to them. Remember that actions speak louder than words.

Sex Education Influences

Many people feel that in response to the lack or insufficiency of information from parents, and the inaccuracy of much of what young people hear from peers, it is increasingly important to have adequate sex education offered

Thought Question 8.2

What did your parents teach you about sexuality? What did they talk about, and what didn’t they talk about? What messages did you get from the media and society? How did these things influence your values and beliefs?

through the school system. However, there is continued controversy about the content of such programs.

Social conservatives, afraid that topics like condom use might encourage young people to engage in sex earlier, have emphasized **abstinence-only** programs—those that maintain that the only way to control pregnancy and STIs is abstinence. Between 1997 and 2009 federal funding for abstinence-only education was \$1.9 billion (Kliff, 2009). During this time the federal government provided zero funding for comprehensive sex education programs. States are required to match federal funds for abstinence-only programs; therefore, state dollars that previously supported comprehensive, medically accurate sex education were diverted to abstinence-only programs (Masters, Beadnell, and Morrison, 2008).

Unfortunately, substantial research shows that abstinence-only sex education doesn’t work. Research has found the following (Hauser, accessed June 2011; Kinsey Institute, accessed 2011; Kliff, 2009; Masters, Beadnell, and Morrison, 2008; Sather and Zinn, 2002; Sexuality Research and Social Policy (2010); Waxman, 2004):

1. Abstinence-only programs provide inaccurate information: Inaccuracies included the ineffectiveness of condoms in reducing the risks of pregnancy and STIs, risks of abortion, and how AIDS is contracted.

2. Abstinence-only programs do not change the sexual behavior of students: Students engaged in sexual activity about as often as students not in such programs, and began to be sexual at about the same ages. Since students in abstinence-only programs were told that condoms were ineffective, they were less likely to use them when they did engage in sexual behavior.

3. Abstinence-only programs provide no help for students who are already sexually active: No assistance, other than abstinence, was given regarding how to protect oneself against pregnancy, HIV, and STIs.

4. Abstinence-only programs don’t result in significant changes in attitudes about engaging in sexual behavior.

Programs that teach abstinence without providing appropriate information about sexual health, contraception, and safer-sex strategies don’t reduce adolescent pregnancy or the spread of STIs. And, lack of adequate sex education contributes to other negative consequences such as sexual abuse and dysfunctional relationships (Newman, 2008). A Johns Hopkins University physician, Jonathan Zenilman (2006), stated that promoting ineffective abstinence-only sex education, disputing the effectiveness of condoms, omitting information on reproductive health, and not providing our children with the skills to protect themselves amounts to *public health malpractice*.

ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY Although teenage pregnancy rates have decreased between 2001 (52.1 births per 1000 population; UNICEF, 2001) and 2008 (41.5 births), the

United States still has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among Western industrialized nations (Martin et al., 2010; UNICEF, 2001; United Nations Statistics Division, 2006), and American adolescents are contracting HIV faster than almost any other demographic group. Experts attribute this difference to lack of information about contraception in U.S. abstinence-only programs.

This situation is of considerable concern given the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy. A pregnant teenager is more likely to have physical complications than a woman in her 20s, and prenatal and infant mortality rates are markedly higher for teens than for older pregnant women. Pregnant teens are also at a higher risk for STIs due in part to a reduction in condom use, because the teen may feel there is no longer any need to be concerned with getting pregnant. These findings are disturbing because the increased chance of contracting STIs during pregnancy can have serious health consequences for the mother and her baby.

If a teenager decides to keep her child, there are often serious negative effects on her education and financial future. With the burden of child-care and inadequate education, many young mothers are underemployed or unemployed and must depend on social services. And, the negative effects of adolescent pregnancy are further evident in the lives of the resulting children. Teen mothers are often unable to provide the quality of parenting that adult mothers do. Children of teen mothers are at a greater risk for physical, cognitive, and emotional problems. There is also a greater likelihood of these children having difficulties in school, compared to children of older mothers (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS The reality is that both government and society have limited influence on our sexuality. Our sexuality evolves and grows regardless of official sanctions or restrictions. We learn about sex whether we do or do not have sex education in our schools. It is not a question of whether we learn. It's more a matter of the *quality* of what we learn. Quality sexuality programs result from well thought-out curricula, with goals and objectives for student learning. Curricula are based on accurate information, in which pursuit of knowledge is encouraged rather than restricted (Blonna and Levitan, 2000).

Research does support the idea that more comprehensive sex education courses have a more desirable effect on adolescent sexual activity than abstinence-only programs. The irony is that, in their attempt to decrease adolescent activity through abstinence-only programs, social conservatives forced a restriction in the very programs—those that provide more comprehensive information about sex—that actually do have the result they wanted. By forcing abstinence-only, they worsened the problem rather than making it better.

Here's some of that research: Students in comprehensive sexuality education classes do not engage in sexual activity more often or earlier, but do use contraception and practice safer sex more consistently when they become sexually active (AGI, 2003a; Crooks and Baur, 2011; Jemmott et al., 1998; Kirby, 1999, 2000; NARAL, 1998; Rathus, Nevid, and Fichner-Rathus, 2000).

With regard to teenage pregnancy, the “European approach to teenage sexual activity, expressed in the form of widespread provision of confidential and accessible contraceptive services to adolescents, is a central factor in explaining the more rapid declines in teenage childbearing in northern and western European countries” (Singh and Darroch, 2002). California, the only state that has not accepted federal abstinence-only money, has seen declines in teenage pregnancy similar to those seen in European countries. Over the last decade, the teenage pregnancy rate in California has dropped more than 40 percent (Boonstra, 2010).

The vast majority of Americans and parents support comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education. Eighty-one percent of Americans and 75 percent of parents want their children to receive a variety of information on subjects including contraception and condom use, sexually transmitted infection, sexual orientation, safer sex practices, abortion, communications and coping skills, and the emotional aspects of sexual relationships. Fifty-six percent of Americans do not believe that abstinence-only education prevents STIs or unintended pregnancies. Given the choice, only 1 to 5 percent of parents remove their children from responsible sexuality education courses (AGI, 2003a, 2003b; Albert, 2004; Research! America and APHA, 2004; KFF, 2009; Kirby, 1999; Research! America and APHA, 2004).

Content of Comprehensive Sex Education Courses In 1964, talking about sex was called *health studies*. Carl, the football coach and physical education instructor, came off the football field and taught sex education. I was a junior, and the class was supposed to be “advanced” sex education, because there had also been a program in eighth-grade health class. Everyone was nervous but ready to hear about the real thing. However, what we learned about was strictly anatomy and physiology and was mainly a repeat of previous material. Any student who could spell “fallopian tube” got an A for the course. We covered the reproductive cycle and followed “Sammy Sperm” on the path to “Ethel Egg” to become “Zelda Zygote.” Then we watched some films on the horrors of venereal disease. The discussion on contraception consisted of prophylactics (which no one could pronounce) and abstinence (which no one was interested in). That was it, and most of us felt that something was missing.

What was missing was any discussion of the personal implications of becoming sexual. Very little was said about

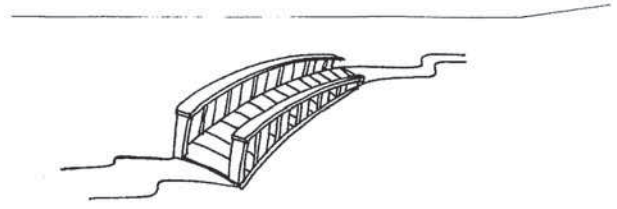
the emotions involved and the importance of communication about sexual behavior. What needed to be discussed then, and are even more crucial in today's society, are the following topics:

1. Emotional implications of a sexual relationship and discussion of fears and anxieties.
2. Communication about whether each party involved is ready for a sexual relationship.
3. What constitutes a good sexual relationship, and mutual respect for each other's boundaries?
4. Values, beliefs, and ramifications of becoming sexual.
5. Contraception and being responsible for your behavior.

The need for good communication skills is very important in a sexual relationship. Many young people don't know how to talk to each other with their clothes on, let alone with them off. That applies to some adults as well. Some couples have been married for 5 or 10 years and have never discussed their sexual relations. Discussing sexual relations is becoming even more critical today as the need for knowing a potential partner's sexual history increases. With the increase in STIs, the need for honesty has become absolute. If classes included both male and female students and included discussing the implications of sexual behavior as well as values and beliefs, people might become more comfortable about talking on a personal level when it is appropriate.

Another area seldom covered in sex education classes is what constitutes a good sexual relationship: the ways and means of being a good sexual partner. Most schools seem to be concerned that parents will think introducing that kind of information encourages sexual activity. But, possibly, the lack of information will encourage exploration and experimentation. Frequently, the unknown prompts more curiosity than the known. Trust Dr. Ruth Westheimer to provide parents and teens with a middle ground. She has published *Dr. Ruth Talks to Kids* (1998), in which she writes for ages up to 14. Her thesis: Teach kids everything, and then encourage them to wait. "Make sure even the first kiss is a memorable experience, is what I tell kids," she says. "I don't think kids should be engaging in sex too early, not even necking and petting. I generally think age fourteen and fifteen is too early, in spite of the fact that by then girls are menstruating and boys may have nocturnal emissions." Above all, she says, kids need to have their questions addressed. Learning and talking about sex does not have to mean giving permission, she insists: "On the contrary, I think that a child knowing about his or her body will be able to deal with the pressure to have sex. This child can say no, I'll wait." In fact, Westheimer is a big advocate of waiting. "I say to teenagers, 'What's the rush?'" (Westheimer, 1998).

By the time young people are in high school, their values and beliefs are already shaped for the most part. Those who have decided to postpone sexual activity are



not going to suddenly change because they have been given information about the *how-to* of sexuality. Those who are already sexually active might benefit from knowing how to be more caring, sensitive, and communicative partners.

Media and Cyberspace Influences

Drive past an elementary school and notice the number of children trying to emulate the latest media sex symbol. These children are being inundated with images of sexual behavior from the media (billboards, TV, magazines, and movies) and the Internet (video games as well as pornographic sites).

TELEVISION Television has had an influential impact on sexual attitudes and behaviors. By the time we are 18, most of us have watched up to 20,000 hours of TV (The Media Project, 2008). The number of sexual scenes on standard network programs has nearly doubled since 1998 (KFF, 2009), and programs like *Desperate Housewives* depict all manner of couplings.

The situation is even more extreme on cable stations where there are lower standards for explicitness. Programs like *Sex and the City* contained a much higher degree of sexually explicit discussions than network TV and had programs that included faked orgasms, penis size, circumcision, and various aspects of oral sex. Currently, HBO has a number of programs that include explicit sexual situations. Many critics are concerned that this type of material is too casual in its approach to sex. Many depictions of sexuality in the media tend to trivialize the complexities of sexual relations and create unrealistic expectations regarding sexual experiences, although studies on the impact of these programs have been inconclusive (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

There are some television programs, however, that may have a beneficial effect on viewers—those that promote greater knowledge, tolerance, and positive social change. For example, for years Oprah Winfrey provided a forum and opportunity for people to discuss many aspects of sexuality. Television advice and educational programs can be useful when giving constructive guidance. Drew Pinsky discusses young people's concerns on *Loveline*, a radio talk show, and gives advice on sex and relationships.

Various studies have found that shows that portrayed negative consequences of sexual activity increased

negative attitudes about sex before marriage. Portrayal of safe sex on TV increased positive attitudes about condom use. Also, network and cable programs on child abuse, rape, and transgender issues have helped to increase knowledge and reduce the stigma often associated with those topics (Eyal and Kynkel, 2008).

So, it appears that if we are careful about the content of television programs portraying and discussing sexual topics, television can result in a net positive effect. The problem is that children are seeing programs with a wide variety of depictions of sex before they are able to judge which are realistic, which are scientific, and which are exaggerated for effect.

INTERNET During the 1990s the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) concluded that our attitudes and behaviors are dramatically influenced by our social groups. And, this research was done during the time when the Internet and online communication were just beginning to explode. As of 2008 there were almost 1.5 billion Internet users worldwide. The impact of this communication advance on sexual behavior and attitudes is potentially enormous. People from all walks of life are now able to communicate. Cultural barriers and distance between groups are becoming smaller all the time, and as a result more people are sharing thoughts and ideas. And, a great deal of what is being shared is about sexual information. It is as though we now have a worldwide peer group with whom we can discuss—for better or worse—sexual questions, ideas, problems, or desires (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

A new form of sex education appears to be developing online. Up to 80 percent of people obtain health information from the Internet, and it can provide quick access to useful information related to sexuality (Fine, 2008). There are various types of sex columnists who answer online questions and an abundance of self-help information on websites. There are sites for discussing difficulties with sexual functioning, exploring alternative lifestyles, and dealing with transgender issues. While not all sites provide accurate information and it is important to use caution when taking advice from an online site, a considerable amount of valuable “education” is occurring online.

Additionally, the Internet has become a dating service where people can post various forms of personal ads to explore possibilities of meeting in person. As discussed in a previous chapter, the Internet has advantages of getting to know someone and clarifying one’s agenda up front. One can find out if someone is seeking casual sex or a life partner. There are even some advantages in that you can actually develop some degree of intimacy before meeting rather than meeting face-to-face without online communication. Attraction can develop without even knowing anything about the other person’s appearance.

But, there are some downsides to the increased use of the Internet for sexual purposes. One comes from

the interaction of cell phone cameras and the Internet. Currently, about 80 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds and 93 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States use cell phones. Using the camera in a phone, 30 percent of adults 20 to 26 years of age report that they have sent pictures of themselves, at least partially naked, to flirt with someone or just for fun. The term for sending nude photos on cell phones is “sexting.” This is problematic because it is frequently done by underage people, it may legally constitute harassment, and it creates the potential for someone’s picture to be spread on the Internet without his or her knowledge or permission (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

Even more people have reported sending sexually explicit text messages or e-mails. Other potential problems concern the impact of early exposure to pornography, as will be discussed next.

IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY ON CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Thirty years ago I showed a film in my human relations class from SEICUS (Sex Information Council of the United States) which showed two naked people who were married talking about their bodies and different types of pleasurable sexual contact. There wasn’t any actual sexual activity. It was a film about increasing communication between couples regarding sex. I got reported to the college dean for showing pornography. By today’s standards such a video might seem tame: We now live in what some refer to as “raunch culture” where pornographic images seem to be everywhere. You can’t watch any cable TV station without seeing ads for *Girls Gone Wild* where hundreds of young women gladly jump at the chance to take off their clothes and pose like porn stars. There are pay-per-view programs that include reality shows such as *Can You Be a Porn Star?* and others on how to do erotic pole dancing as a form of exercise and conditioning.

Approximately 72 million people visit adult sites each month in the United States. Much of the Internet’s technology has been advanced by this demand, and adult programming continues to be a major source of income. This trend has prompted the further development of availability on cell phones, iPods, PDAs, and PSP-handheld games and other broadband video streaming platforms (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

Research has found that most adults use adult websites for benign recreational activity. It offers anonymous access to sexually oriented material while providing sexual outlets—such as chat rooms—that are safe from STIs and other relationship risks. Further, the Internet can be useful to people who wish to explore sexual fantasies online in the safety and privacy of their own homes. There are some who feel that mainstream pornography can help adult couples improve their sex lives, or that watching pornography can increase communication with one’s partner when sharing fantasies.

But, what about all the young people who aren’t having sex and are just finding out about it through pornography?

In the United States, 90 percent of young people have seen Internet pornography by the time they are 16. The average age of first exposure is 11 years old (Sullivan, 2009). Undoubtedly, the numbers have increased as there has been a proliferation in the availability of the Internet, driven by technological advances.

Young people may be influenced to become involved in sexual activities at an earlier age due to exposure to pornography, and they may develop problematic attitudes about sexuality. Although there may be problems with its methodology, one study found a correlation between exposure to Internet porn and younger age at first intercourse for both males and females, a significantly younger age at first oral sex for males, more traditional gender roles for both sexes, and greater sexual harassment by males (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

Another concern about the exposure to pornography is that young people will come to assume that what they are seeing is “normal.” The more often they are exposed to it, the more likely they will view it as typical behavior. As a result, some individuals might justify coercing their partners to engage in behaviors that they have watched on pornography sites. Even more damaging, when pornography portrays women as wildly responsive to anything that men do and then real life women don’t react that way, men may feel inadequate or cheated, and both sexes may doubt the normality of their own sexuality. While more research on the effects of pornography will undoubtedly be done, perhaps it is useful to remember that porn stars are acting and not everything we see at the movies is real.

Cybersex and Addiction There is a small but increasing group of individuals who surf the Internet for erotic stimulation and sexual outlets to an extreme degree. Almost 9 percent of one study’s participants spent at least 11 hours a week watching pornography online. They became so involved with online sex that their personal relationships suffered (Cooper et al., 1999). Further research indicates that 1 percent of sex site surfers are so hooked on or addicted to **cybersex** that their capacity to function in their everyday lives is impaired. Partners of these people report feeling ignored, abandoned, or betrayed as a result of the compulsive behavior. Some neglect their job responsibilities.

Some mental health professionals have expressed concern about teenage addiction to cybersex. Clinicians believe that male teenagers especially can be addicted to Internet sex and have reported masturbating three or four times a day while on various websites. Such excessive behavior may lead to social isolation, unhealthy sexual attitudes, loneliness, and depression.

Given that it is a fairly recent phenomenon, further studies of cybersex will provide more information as to whether it is a harmless outlet or a potentially harmful variety of sexual problem. But, a number of professionals have at least raised the awareness of the possible adverse consequences of getting hooked on cybersex (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

Influence of the First Sexual Experience

There are many reasons for exploring the impact of your first sexual experience. (We’ll assume, for the sake of discussion, that “first sexual experience” means sexual intercourse, but it could have many meanings, depending on what feels like an important experience to you.) One reason is that such a big deal is made about it that it is almost impossible for it not to have an effect. All through adolescence the emphasis is on, *Have* you, *Will* you, or *When* are you going to “go all the way”? Such a fuss is made about it that it almost can’t be ignored. It is also seen by many as a major demarcation in the life span. Once people have had intercourse, several areas of their lives may feel different. Many feel that they can’t go back to playing games and being children anymore. Some people perceive it, correctly or not, as a passage into adulthood. Becoming sexual is a significant change that affects how a person relates to his or her own gender, the opposite sex, and parents.

When people become sexual, complex emotional reactions are involved. Many young people don’t have the emotional maturity to cope with sexual relationships. For example, I have heard countless stories about the girl who has sex with a guy, only to be totally ignored by him the following day at school. A number of young women report that they felt used or taken advantage of after being sexual. And that doesn’t apply only to the girls.

One male student described how devastated he was as a result of his first sexual experience. He had a crush on a girl for an entire year before they began dating. One night at a high school party, they drank too much, one thing led to another, and they had sexual intercourse. He thought it was incredible, and that because she had done that with him, it meant they were

Thought Question 8.3

Was your first sexual experience positive, neutral, or negative? What did you decide about relationships from your first experience?

Are You Ready for Sex?

You are ready for sex if:

1. You feel guiltless and comfortable about your current level of involvement.
2. You are confident that you will not be humiliated and that your reputation will not be hurt.
3. The partner is not pressuring you for sex and you are not pressuring him or her.
4. You are not trying to prove your love for the other person, increase your self-worth, prove that you are mature, show that you can attract a sexual partner, get attention, affection, or love, or rebel against parents or society.
5. It will be an expression of your current feelings rather than an attempt to improve a poor relationship or one that is growing cold.
6. You can discuss and agree on an effective method of contraception and share the details, responsibilities, and costs of the use of the method.
7. You can discuss the possibility of contracting transmitting sexually transmitted illnesses.
8. You have discussed and agreed on what both of you will do if conception occurs, because no contraceptive method is 100 percent effective.

in love. It had tremendous importance and meaning for him. When he called her the next day, she answered the phone and pretended to be someone else and told him that *the girl he had been with* couldn't see him anymore. He was deeply upset and confused. Now, she may have been regretting what they had done or may have been feeling guilty about it. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to say anything about that, possibly because of lack of self-knowledge. As a result, he went through a great deal of distress, wondering what he had done wrong and what her response meant about him. Those kinds of complica-

Advice on How to Have a Good Sex Life

1. Build your self-esteem and accept your body.
2. Communicate with your partner about what you want, what feels good, and what turns you on. Share fears, difficulties, and sensitive areas. Stop during sex if you need to talk.
3. Get rid of resentments and anger.
4. Be willing to receive. Take turns receiving.
5. Be willing to please and pleasure yourself as well as your partner.
6. Follow your breath during sex—keep releasing deeper.
7. Stay focused in the present. Keep your mind on the area of your body that is being touched or stroked.
8. You're responsible for your own orgasm. It's not just your technique—it is the loving energy that does it.
9. Examine and change any personal beliefs that restrict your enjoyment. Gain information from books, workshops, or counseling.
10. Have fun and enjoy humor during sex.

tions and the resulting emotional responses need to be discussed as a part of sex education classes.

Informal classroom surveys over the years about first sexual experiences show that about one third were positive, one third were neutral, and one third were negative. (If you were one of the people for whom it was positive, congratulations. For the rest, remember that you are not alone.) If the first experience was negative, it may be healing to consider the experience and its effects. For all students, it can be useful to think about and discuss what you decided about yourself, the other person, sex, and the world in general as a result of your first experience.

SEXUAL COERCION

As important as it is to have adequate sex education, that information isn't enough when it comes to unwanted sexual advances. A person has been sexually victimized when he or she is deprived of free choice and is coerced or forced to submit to sexual acts under duress. Victims of coercive sexual acts often suffer severe negative consequences. Given the continued research that supports that a significant number of women and men will be violated to some degree during the course of their lifetime, it is important to understand the effects, the process of healing, and how to be supportive of someone you know who might be dealing with some form of coercion. In this section we will deal with harassment, rape, and sexual abuse.

Sexual Harassment

In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued regulations defining **sexual harassment**, stating it was a form of sex discrimination prohibited by the Civil Rights Act, which had been originally passed in 1964. In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court first ruled that sexual harassment was a form of job discrimination and held it to be illegal.

In 1992, this issue was thrust into the national consciousness with the much publicized Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill sexual harassment hearings held by the U.S. Congress. Hill came forward with her story around the same time that Thomas was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court. During the debate regarding the confirmation of Thomas, Hill testified that he had continuously asked her out on dates after she had said no, and made numerous comments of a sexually explicit nature. She stated that he talked about pornographic movies, talked about his genitals, and described sexual acts that he enjoyed performing. During a meeting in his office, he allegedly asked her if she had put a pubic hair on his coke can.

There is a certain irony in the fact that the claims of harassment occurred at the time that Thomas was Hill's boss at the EEOC, the same organization that had previously defined what constitutes harassment.

Since the hearings, the number of sexual harassment complaints filed with the EEOC has risen dramatically, more

than doubling between 1989 and 2007. And, the percentage of claims filed by men has increased from 9 percent in the early 1990s to 16 percent in 2007.

The U.S. Supreme Court has made it easier to sue in sexual harassment cases because the victims no longer have to prove psychological harm, only that sexually inappropriate behavior took place. The Supreme Court also has recognized that illegal harassment can also occur between people of the same sex. Prior to this determination, lower courts had concluded that men could not sexually harass other men, nor could women harass women. Currently, the court system acknowledges that same-sex harassment is in fact possible, based on the definition of sexual harassment, and has ruled that unwanted sexual behavior by one co-worker toward another is illegal, regardless of gender.

Most people have come to understand that there are laws that prohibit sexual harassment on the job; however, it is still not always clear when bad behavior crosses the line into illegal behavior, and just who can be held liable for it. According to the EEOC, sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The EEOC guidelines describe two types of sexual harassment. One form is commonly called *quid pro quo*, which means giving sex in return for some benefit. It usually involves compliance with unwanted sexual advances as a requirement for getting employment or educational benefits, or favorable treatment in either of those areas. The second type of harassment is referred to as “hostile or offensive work environment.” While this type may be less clear, it is probably more common. A hostile work environment is one in which a reasonable person in a similar situation would find the behavior of the harasser to be intimidating, hostile, or abusive (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

A hallmark of sexual harassment is the use and abuse of power to secure sexual favors. Sexual harassment has three attributes:

1. A power differential in the relationship
2. Inappropriate approach
3. Pressure after expression of disinterest

The following guidelines may be helpful if you think that you have been the victim of sexual harassment on campus or at work:

1. If the harassment includes rape or attempted rape, file criminal charges against the perpetrator.
2. If it does not include rape, write a letter to the offender. Describe exactly what happened, your feelings about the incidents, and how you reacted. Include a short statement indicating your desire for the harasser to stop. Sign and date the letter, and make duplicate copies. Send a copy to the perpetrator, and indicate that if the behavior doesn't stop immediately, you will press charges using the letter as evidence.
3. When the harassment takes a lesser but still annoying form of off-color jokes, inappropriate cartoons

or pictures, requests for dates, or comments about how you look, many experts recommend confronting the person directly and telling him or her to stop. When you clearly and assertively tell a harasser to stop, it lets the person know that the behavior is unwelcome. If the person continues, you have taken the first step in making a formal complaint or even a legal case against the person.

4. Document the inappropriate behavior by writing down the date, time, and incident in a diary or journal; this can be important information if you need to take the problem to a supervisor, or even a lawyer.
5. Seek support. Don't hide what happened. Talk to co-workers, fellow students, and people who could be resources for assistance. Relate your incidents to your significant other, parents, or other family members.
6. If the behavior doesn't stop, meet with the offender's supervisor. In a college setting, the place to file a report may be with the department chairperson, the student center, the sexual harassment panel, or the dean of students.
7. Know your rights. Sexual harassment is against the law, and you don't have to put up with it. Obtain the company/school sexual harassment policy. Read it thoroughly, and make sure that you follow its guidelines for handling your case.

Although it may seem frightening, it's better to act quickly than to wait and see what happens. Harassers seldom stop their activities if they are not challenged (Blonna and Levitan, 2000).

Most employers are developing their own policies regarding harassment, and many are producing manuals or films, or buying media productions on sexual harassment. These may include online tutorials, virtual vignettes, and other Internet training aids. By providing the employee with this information, employers can often demonstrate to the courts that they are making a sincere effort to prevent, or promptly correct, sexual harassment by any employee (Paludi, 2003).

Rape

Rape is forced sexual intercourse involving both psychological coercion and physical force (Bureau of Justice Statistics, accessed July 7, 2011) regardless of the individuals' physical sex, sexual orientation, or previous acquaintance. Rape does not occur only between strangers. Most rapes (83%) occur between two people who already know each other (CDC, 2004). This is known as **date** or **acquaintance rape**. Rape can even occur between two people who know each other well, and even those who have had consensual sex before.

Although rape has been decreasing in recent years (from a high of about 3 rapes per 1000 population in 1979), it is still the case that about 1 in 2000 people are raped every year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, accessed

July 6, 2011). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2004) estimates that 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will be victims of attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. One third of these happen before the victim is aged 12 and half of these before the victim is aged 18.

Forty years ago it was thought that rape was motivated more by a need for power and domination rather than sex. However, more recent research suggests that while power and domination are involved in sexual coercion, rape is also motivated by a desire for sexual gratification.

Many rapists have self-centered personalities and are insensitive to the needs of others. Research provides evidence that men with narcissistic personality traits are more inclined to commit rape or other acts of sexual coercion. Narcissists tend to be aggressive and retaliate against others for real or imagined slights. These tendencies give them an unreasonable sense of entitlement and may influence them to believe that women owe them sexual favors.

Thus, anger, power, and sexual gratification all play a part in committing rape. Anger and a need to express power appear to be more involved with stranger rape, and a desire for sexual gratification seems to be more involved with date rape (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

No one has the right to pressure another person for sex; no one “owes” sex to another. Healthy relationships involve respect; sexual pressure is an indicator of an unhealthy relationship.

On college campuses alcohol is a factor in rape. In a 2001 study by the Harvard School of Public Health (Harvard School of Public Health, accessed July 6, 2011), 72 percent of college rape victims reported being intoxicated at the time of the attack.

There is also increasing concern about the use of the illegal drug **Rohypnol**, also called roofies, R2, roofenol, and Roche, in college date rape. About.com—Women’s Health (accessed July 6, 2011) provides the following information about Rohypnol. It’s a tasteless and odorless powder that dissolves readily in carbonated liquids. Effects begin in 10 to 30 minutes and include confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, impaired judgment, and disinhibition. The effects are increased when combined with alcohol.

Given the above information, there are some logical ways to protect oneself from rape, including the following:

- Don’t accept drinks from people you don’t know well and trust.
- Don’t leave a drink unattended.
- Stay sober.
- Avoid being in secluded places with people you don’t know well and trust.
- Practice being assertive: Say “no” in a definite way.

If you are the victim of a rape, the best thing to do is to contact the police and get help and advice as soon as possible—from a parent, a doctor, a counselor, or another trusted, responsible adult. Internet and local Yellow Pages have listings under Rape Crisis Centers or Human Services, and rape hotlines are staffed with counselors trained to help.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs whenever one person sexually dominates and exploits another—whether by means of activity or suggestion. The abuse can be explicit, as in rape, intercourse with a child, or fondling, but it can also be indirect, such as when a man (or boy) pressures a woman (or girl) to go further with him than she wants to. Abuse can also occur—and cause sexual harm—when no touching is involved. A person who has been forced to pose for pornographic pictures has suffered sexual abuse even though his or her body may never have been touched by the offender (Maltz, 2001). Moreover, when an adult shows a child or adolescent pornographic movies or explicit pictures, or comments inappropriately about the child’s developing body, this too constitutes sexual abuse.

Expanding the definition of sexual abuse has helped many survivors identify their experiences more accurately and better convey the damage of their experience to others, which often helps the person cope with his or her misplaced guilt and self-reproach, and heal. “In the beginning of my marriage I told my husband about a sexual relationship I had with my stepfather,” says Andrea, one survivor. “The term *sexual abuse* was not used in 1969, and rape and incest didn’t seem accurate enough to be honest.” Sadly, for many years this language gap prevented both her and her husband from realizing that her stepfather’s sexual touching was abuse, and kept them from understanding the extent of the damage the abuse had caused her (Maltz, 1991).

For many survivors, acknowledging sexual abuse is a difficult step. To help you understand the meaning of sexual abuse, and to identify whether you have been sexually abused, consider these four questions. If you answer yes to any of them, you have been sexually abused. (Questions and selected text excerpts are from Wendy Maltz, *The Sexual Healing Journey*. Copyright © 2001 by Wendy Maltz. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.)

1. **Were you unable to give your full consent to the sexual activity?** If you were harassed, intimidated, manipulated, or forced into the sexual activity, you were not able to give full consent. If you were under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or medication, you were not able to give full consent. If you were a child, made to participate in sexual activity with an adult or older child, you were not able to give full consent.
2. **Did the sexual activity involve the betrayal of a trusted relationship?** If a person in a caretaking or authority role (such as a relative, teacher, religious leader, therapist, or employer) used his or her position to force or encourage you to engage in sexual activity, you were sexually exploited and thus sexually abused.
3. **Was the sexual activity characterized by force or violence?** Any sexual situation in which you

were restrained or bound against your will, physically forced, or harmed constitutes abuse.

4. **Do you feel that you were abused?** For purposes of sexual healing, what matters most is whether you feel you were sexually abused. If an experience made you feel uneasy or exploited—regardless of how others perceive it—it has had an effect on you. You need to acknowledge the experience and its impact in order to be able to grow beyond it.

EFFECTS OF ABUSE Probably the most detrimental aspect of sexual abuse is the violation of basic trust. How does someone feel safe going through life, let alone dealing with sexual situations, when his or her boundaries have been violated in such a way? This is especially true in the case of incest. Being abused by the very people who are supposed to nurture you, and whom a child should be able to trust, takes an emotional toll on the person that often causes trust issues in later relationships, such as in a marriage. It is little wonder that victims often have difficulties in many aspects of their lives, since abuse affects trust, self-concept, emotions, the ability to communicate, and the capacity for developing and maintaining relationships, and causes seriously blurred boundaries.

The following are some of the common problems, difficulties, and life patterns for adults molested as children (A.M.A.C., a term that is frequently used in therapy or support groups):

- **General mistrust and expectation of betrayal:** Lacking faith that people will be there when you need them.
- **Denial of pain and hurt:** Inability to cope with emotions; confusion about feelings; showing one feeling on the outside while having a different feeling on the inside.
- **Self-destructive behavior:** Attempting to cope through drug and/or alcohol use; creating chaos in your life as a diversion from the real problem.
- **Powerlessness:** Being passive-aggressive or unassertive; playing the martyr role or being a perfectionist; feeling unnecessary guilt.
- **Disrupted family of origin:** Strained relationship with various family members.
- **Disruptions in current family relationships:** Tolerating spousal abuse; feeling unable to be a good parent; alternately seeking emotional closeness and withdrawing; seeking excessive support and approval.

RECOVERY FROM ABUSE Public awareness of the frequency of sexual abuse has increased, and fortunately there are now more counseling programs and therapy groups to help victims deal with the resulting issues. Sometimes, because of denial of the original event, abuse victims become conscious of what happened only when some other crisis occurs later in their lives. In the preface

to the 20th anniversary edition of their book *The Courage to Heal* (2008), Ellen Bass and Laura Davis have included stories from women about how helpful the book was for them in the process of healing after they began to deal with the issue of abuse. They state that while there are various additions and improvements to the original work, the essential information remains the same. They offer excellent information about resolving problems that arise from abuse, and recommend a process for healing that includes:

1. Building a support system and dealing with crisis.
2. Assessing the impact of the abuse and learning about coping mechanisms.
3. Believing it happened and breaking silence.
4. Understanding it wasn't your fault and learning to trust yourself.
5. Dealing with the emotions of grief and anger.
6. Confronting and/or dealing with family.
7. Resolving and moving on in life.

The process is complex and requires effort, but there is hope for **survivors** (a term preferred over **victims**) to heal, and it usually begins with a willingness to acknowledge and confront the situation. There are a number of reasons why talking about what happened is an important step in the healing process (Based on Bass and Davis, 2008):

- You move through the shame and secrecy that keeps you isolated.
- You move through denial and acknowledge the truth of your abuse.
- You make it possible to get understanding and help.
- You get more in touch with your feelings.
- You make space in transformative relationships for the kind of intimacy that comes from honesty.
- You help end child sexual abuse by breaking the silence in which it thrives.
- You establish yourself as a person in the present who is dealing with the abuse from the past.
- You become a model for other survivors.
- You (eventually) feel proud and strong.

Whether you are a survivor of abuse or not, it is important to understand the stages that someone might go through in the process of healing. Given the incidence of sexual abuse for women (one in four to one in six, depending on the source), nearly everyone has or will have contact with another person who is a survivor of some form of childhood sexual abuse. Although most of the following stages are necessary for survivors, some are not applicable for everyone. (The following information comes from Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, "Stages of Healing," in *The Courage to Heal*, 3rd ed. Copyright © 1994 by Ellen Bass and Laura S. Davis. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.)

1. **The decision to heal:** After you recognize the effects of sexual abuse in your life, you need to make an active commitment to heal. Deep healing

happens only when you choose it and are willing to change yourself.

2. **The emergency stage:** Beginning to deal with memories and suppressed feelings can throw your life into utter turmoil. Remember, this is only a stage. It won't last.
3. **Remembering:** Many survivors suppress all memories of what happened to them as children. Those who do not forget the actual incidents often forget how it felt at the time. Remembering is the process of getting back both memory and feeling.
4. **Breaking silence:** Most adult survivors kept the abuse a secret in childhood. Telling another person about what happened to you is a powerful healing force that can dispel the shame of being a victim.
5. **Understanding it wasn't your fault:** Children usually believe the abuse is their fault. Adult survivors must place the blame where it belongs—directly on the shoulders of the abusers.
6. **Making contact with the child within:** Many survivors have lost touch with their own vulnerability. Getting in touch with the child within can help you feel compassion for yourself, more anger at your abuser, and greater intimacy with others.
7. **Trusting yourself:** The best guide for healing is your inner voice. Learning to trust your own perceptions, feelings, and intuitions forms a new basis for action in the world.
8. **Grieving and mourning:** As children being abused, and later as adults struggling to survive, most survivors haven't felt their losses. Grieving is a way to honor your pain, let go, and move into the present.
9. **Anger—the backbone of healing:** Anger is a powerful and liberating force. Whether you need to get in touch with it or have always had plenty to spare, directing your rage squarely at your abuser, and at those who didn't protect you, is pivotal to healing.
10. **Disclosures and confrontations:** Directly confronting your abuser and/or your family is not for every survivor, but it can be a dramatic, cleansing tool.
11. **Forgiveness:** Forgiveness of the abuser is not an essential part of the healing process, although it tends to be the one most recommended. The idea is that forgiving someone frees you up to receive healing for yourself.
12. **Spirituality:** Having a sense of a power greater than yourself can be a real asset in the healing process. Spirituality is a uniquely personal experience. You might find it through traditional religion, meditation, nature, or a support group.
13. **Resolution and moving on:** As you move through these stages again and again, you will reach a point of integration. Your feelings and perspectives will stabilize. You will come to terms with your

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

I

*I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in
I am lost. . . I am helpless
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.*

II

*I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.*

III

*I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.*

IV

*I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.*

V

I walk down another street.

Source: Portia Nelson.

abuser and other family members. While you won't erase your history, you will make deep and lasting changes in your life. Having gained awareness, compassion, and power through healing, you will have the opportunity to work toward a better world.

KNOWING YOUR SEXUAL RIGHTS Wendy Maltz (2001) has identified eight sexual rights that protect and enable each of us to develop positive sexuality:

1. The right to develop healthy attitudes about sex.
2. The right to sexual privacy.
3. The right to protection from bodily harassment and harm.
4. The right to say “no” to sexual behavior.
5. The right to control touch and sexual contact.
6. The right to stop sexual arousal that feels inappropriate or uncomfortable.

Case Studies and Student Stories

Tiffany stepped on the scales and was horrified when she viewed the reading. She weighed 312 pounds. Unhappily married and horribly depressed, she couldn't even begin to figure out how she had come to be in such a situation.

When exploring her childhood through pictures of the family, she recalled some of the events of the past. When she was around 8 years old, her father went on a business trip and her uncle Jake was left to care for her and a younger sister. After he left, Tiffany began to have strange dreams. She dreamed that a man, who resembled her father's brother, came into her room. The dream continued to haunt her for years. In the dream her uncle bathed her, something her dad had long since quit doing. The bathing escalated into fondling. But, as her uncle carried her to the bedroom, she usually awakened from the dream.

It was during this time that food became her solace. She could eat unspeakable amounts and had contests with her cousin over who could eat the most and the fastest.

Because of the recurring dream and her compulsive eating, Tiffany decided to seek counseling. Over the course of several months of therapy, she began to recall that her uncle had indeed raped her at the age of 8. The abuse had continued for some time.

When recalling her story as an adult, she realized that her weight gain had been an attempt to put a barrier between her

and those around her—especially the uncle. She ate for comfort and protection, and any type of food made her feel better. She also remembered that as a teenager she had suffered ridicule and taunting when she walked down the halls at her high school. She had finally quit school and then got married to a man older than herself in an attempt to be taken care of and to escape her problems.

Considering the patterns in her life, she began to realize that she had to do something. Somehow she wanted to shed her barrier of protection, so she could be a healthier, happier person.

Her counselor suggested Weight Watchers and Curves, and new patterns of behavior began to emerge. With time in counseling and new ideas of how to achieve weight loss, Tiffany began to slim down.

Once Tiffany realized the motive for her weight gain, she began to slim down and feel more confident in the process of healing. Her husband was thrilled with her new appearance, and her children sent her on a cruise when she lost 100 pounds. Her barrier crumbled along with the nightmares of the past.

Source: Written by D. Juanita Woods.

7. The right to develop our sexuality according to our sexual preferences and orientation.
8. The right to enjoy healthy sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

Sexual abusers can confuse their victims about many of these rights. Although offenders may try to convince themselves and their victims otherwise, sexual abuse does not occur by accident. Abusers either intentionally harm or take actions that they know could cause harm. Either way, they rob victims of their sexual rights.

THE RECOVERED MEMORY DEBATE With the increase in reports of sexual abuse over the years, there has been an increase in the number of people who claim to have **recovered memories** of abuse from the past. Currently, there is controversy over the possibility that some of the recollections of abuse may be false.

Skeptics of recovered memories think that the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of the everybody-is-a-victim syndrome. They argue that recovered memories are inadvertently planted in suggestible clients by untrained or overzealous psychotherapists who believe that most problems stem from childhood sexual abuse (Colangelo, 2007). They note that thousands of families and individuals have been affected by the tendency to accept claims at face value without validating evidence. The proof that skeptics offer is the number of cases in which the falsely accused individual was later exonerated by the legal system or by the victim recanting their testimony (Colangelo, 2007).

Much of the current debate centers on how traumatic memories are formed and remembered. How trustworthy are memories 20 or 30 years old? Are traumatic memories stored differently than ordinary memories? Can people be influenced to remember things that didn't happen or to remember vastly distorted versions of what happened? Why is it that some people can't forget what happened to them (even when they wish they could), and others can repress the memory for years?

So where are we now on this controversial subject? There is now general agreement that traumatic memories are often processed differently than memories of ordinary events and that recovered memories are possible while not necessarily accurate in their entirety. A number of professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association, have issued statements supporting the belief that memories can be recovered later in life. The various organizations also acknowledge that a "memory" may be suggested and then remembered as true, a phenomenon that has long been known to be quite easy to cause in experimental situations (Loftus, Miller, and Burns, 1978; McGowan, 2009). Research indicates that recovered memories may be fictitious at times and authentic at other times (Lindsay et al., 2009; McGowan, 2009). The recovered memory debate should not be cause to revert back to a time when abused victims didn't report their experience for fear of not being believed. But, we must also act responsibly to protect the innocent from wrongful accusations that stem from false memories (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Some people think of homosexuality primarily as sexual contact between individuals of the same sex, but this definition is limiting. Actually, the word **homosexual** includes sexual behavior, emotional affiliation, and/or self-definition. Sexual orientation is a way of classifying individuals according to the gender of the people they are attracted to. Attraction includes all the feelings you experience when you fall in love: emotional, romantic, affectionate, and sexual feelings of wanting to be with and share with another person. Heterosexuals are people whose deep feelings of attraction or romantic love are directed toward members of the opposite sex, homosexuals are people who feel these same feelings toward members of their own sex; bisexuals are people who experience these feelings toward persons of both sexes (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

Homosexuals are found in every culture, but cross-cultural attitudes toward homosexuality vary from condemnation to acceptance. Herdt (1994) and others have described “third gender” members in various societies—shamans, priests, berdaches, and celibates. Some of these individuals are described as having cross-gender attributes and homosexual behaviors possibly analogous to gay and lesbian behavior in Western societies. One hypothesis is that there is a “gay genotype” of ancient origin, now widely dispersed in human societies, the phenotypic expression of which encompasses the many forms of “third genderness” described in some societies, as well as homosexuality in Western cultures (Davidson and Moore, 2001).

Acceptance of homosexuality is increasing in the United States: 2008 was the first year in which an equal number of respondents viewed homosexual relations as “morally acceptable” as those who believed them “morally wrong.” People who know someone who is gay are also generally more accepting of homosexuality. Young people are more accepting than are people over 30, who are still more tolerant than those over 50. The increased acceptance may be due to more younger people having a friend or acquaintance who is gay. While attitudes are changing, derogatory terms such as fag, fairy, queer, lezzie, and dyke continue to be used today. Many young people use the phrase, “That is so gay!” to mean something negative.

Homophobia is defined as irrational fear of homosexuality in others, fear of homosexual feelings within oneself, or self-loathing because of one’s homosexuality. One indicator that our society has a homophobic segment is the persistent belief that homosexuals are deviant. But consider this: Pick up a newspaper any day of the week and read about rape and other violence. A frequent reason for a woman being admitted to the emergency room of a hospital is battering by her spouse, a heterosexual male. It is an alarming comment on our society when a father drowning his child in the toilet (or pick any article on violence toward children from the daily papers) receives less attention and causes less concern than what two consenting adults of the same sex do in the privacy of their

Definitions

Sex: The biological category of male or female as defined by physical differences in genetic composition and in reproductive anatomy and function.

Gender: The cultural, social, and psychological meanings that are associated with masculinity or femininity.

Gender roles: The behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits that are designated as either masculine or feminine in a given culture.

Gender-role stereotype: The beliefs and expectations people hold about the typical characteristics, preferences, and behavior of men and women.

Sexual orientation: The direction of a person’s emotional and erotic attraction toward members of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes.

home. Perhaps it is time to reconsider *what* is deviant in our society.

Continuum of Sexual Orientation

In our society, we tend to make clear-cut distinctions between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Actually, the delineation is not so precise. A relatively small percentage of people consider themselves to be exclusively homosexual; a greater number think of themselves as exclusively heterosexual. These groups represent the opposite ends of a continuum. Individuals between the ends of the continuum exhibit varying mixtures of preferences and experiences, which may also change over time.

Alfred Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martins, 1948) and others devised a seven-point scale from his surveys and research, using 0 to represent heterosexuality, 6 to indicate homosexuality, and 3 to represent equal attraction or bisexuality. According to the Kinsey data, the exclusively homosexual category comprised 2 percent of women and 4 percent of men. Although this percentage of people who identified themselves as having had exclusively homosexual experiences appears small, 3 percent of the 300 million people in the United States is more than 9 million people. The number of predominantly homosexual people may actually be closer to 10 percent of the population. Accurate statistics are hard to obtain because social pressures cause many homosexual people to conceal their orientation or activity (a behavior known as “being in the closet”). Social pressure for heterosexual conformity often results in homosexual people dating, having sexual experiences with, and even marrying partners of the other sex (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

The importance of this information is that it demonstrates that sexuality isn’t an either/or question. Although there are far more people on the heterosexual end of the scale, the range of responses is still a continuum, and that creates part of the confusion about just who is or isn’t

homosexual. Further, the Kinsey scale may give a false impression that all people have a fixed, stable sexual orientation, when in fact sexual orientation is more accurately determined by patterns over time rather than at any given point in time. Psychologist Lisa Diamond (2008) uses the term **sexual fluidity** to describe variability in same-sex and other-sex attraction at various times and situations throughout the lifespan.

Development of Sexual Orientation

The controversy over the cause of homosexuality continues. Are homosexuals a product of biology (including both genetic inheritance and prenatal and adult hormone differences), or of parenting patterns, life experiences, and the psychological attributes of the person—nature or nurture? Although considerable research has been done over the years, many of the findings are conflicting and there isn't an exact answer to this complex question.

Studies have found that pairs of identical twins are both homosexual anywhere from 25 percent to 95 percent of the time (Whitam, Diamond, and Martin, 1993). This suggests that something in the identical twins' shared genetic makeup affects their sexual orientation. It also suggests that there are other unknown factors involved because, if totally genetic, if one twin was gay, the other should be gay 100 percent of the time. The fact that not all people with identical genes have the same sexual orientation means that there must be other influences at work, but it is as yet unclear what these might be.

One line of evidence suggests that the amount of androgen hormones that a fetus is exposed to in the womb may play some role (Williams et al., 2000). Davidson and Moore (2001) point out some recent evidence that the size of certain brain structures seems to be correlated with sexual orientation. But, even if this is true, current understanding of the brain is inadequate to explain how such quantitative differences could produce qualitative differences in a psychological phenomenon as complex as sexual orientation. Though some of these studies are now quite old, the controversy and latest research findings appear to be relatively the same (Davidson and Moore, 2001; William Byne, 2007). Much research is still needed to clarify the genetic and environmental contributions, as well as gene by environment interactions, influencing homosexuality.

The implications of a genetic contribution to sexual orientation are significant. If it turns out that homosexuals are born that way, it could undercut the animosity gays have had to contend with for centuries. "It would reduce being gay to something like being left-handed, which is in fact all that it is," said gay San Francisco journalist and author Randy Shilts.

Additional evidence that sexual orientation is genetic (Schwartz, 2008) is that various "treatments" have been used to attempt to change homosexual orientation to heterosexual. This author reports that such attempts in the past have not been successful, and much controversy surrounds

current therapies designed to develop heterosexual functioning in homosexually oriented individuals.

Sexual orientation, regardless of where it falls on the continuum, seems to be formed from a composite of inconsistent and, to date, undetermined elements. A behavior pattern as complex and variable as sexual orientation is unlikely to be due to a single, simple biological cause. It appears to be more appropriate to think of the continuum of sexual orientation as influenced by a variety of psychosocial and biological factors that may be unique for each person, rather than thinking in terms of a single causative factor for sexual orientation (Schwartz, 2008). Complicating matters, the differences in findings relating to female versus male homosexuality indicate that there may be different pathways in the development of each of the orientations (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

As important as the controversy itself are the feelings that we are perhaps placing too much emphasis on the answer, or that we are possibly asking the wrong question.

As research into the biology of sexual orientation proceeds, we should ask why we as a society are so emotionally invested in its outcome. Will it—or should it—make any difference in the way we perceive ourselves and others or in the way we live our lives and allow others to live theirs? Perhaps the answers to the most salient questions in this debate reside not in the biology of human brains, but within the cultures those brains have created (Davidson and Moore, 2001).

Sexual Orientation and Mental Health

The information presented here is taken from a review of research findings on sexual orientation by Gregory Herek, Ph.D. (1991). This information was prepared by Sandra Moreland, Robinann Cogburn, and Maryka Biaggio for the Oregon Psychological Association (reprinted by permission).

IS HOMOSEXUALITY A MENTAL ILLNESS OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEM?

The answer is no. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals agree that homosexuality is not an illness, a mental disorder, or an emotional problem. Much objective scientific research over the past 35 years shows us that homosexuals have no more emotional or social problems than heterosexuals. In fact, the only proven difference between the two is that of sexual orientation. Homosexuality was thought to be a mental illness in the past because mental health professionals lacked objective information about homosexuality and based their theories on assumptions, including false stereotypes and prejudice. When they examined the objective data, they had to change their views. In the early 1970s the term *homosexuality* was removed from the official manual that lists all mental and emotional disorders.

CAN SEXUAL ORIENTATION BE CHANGED? Sexual orientation usually cannot be changed, and attempts to change it can be harmful. Changing one's sexual orientation is

not simply a matter of changing one's sexual behavior: It requires altering one's emotional, romantic, and sexual feelings, and restructuring one's self-concept and social identity. Some practitioners have developed so-called conversion therapies intended to change homosexual orientation to heterosexual. These therapies do not generally work. Some religious groups also claim success in converting homosexual orientation to heterosexual, but these claims are not documented in a way that can be scientifically evaluated. Conversion therapies can result in serious psychological damage. Rather than creating heterosexual feelings, conversion therapies can deprive lesbians and gay men of the ability to feel significant romantic or sexual attraction toward anyone. Psychologists generally agree that people who accept and integrate their sexual orientation (accept and act in accordance with their inner feelings) are psychologically better adjusted than those who don't. Thus, homosexually oriented people can refrain from acting on their feelings and from letting others know of their sexual orientation, but only at a substantial cost to their personal well-being.

SHOULD HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION BE CHANGED?

There is no objective or scientific reason to attempt conversion of lesbians or gay men to heterosexual orientation. Homosexuality in and of itself is not harmful to society. Attempts at conversion can be harmful, however, and may encourage attitudes of prejudice. Such attitudes are harmful to society. Rather than trying to change the orientation of homosexuals, most mental health professionals work to help persons of all sexual orientations accept and integrate their inner feelings and overcome their prejudices and false beliefs about one another.

DOES A HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION AFFECT A PERSON'S ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY?

The answer is no. Objective data show that homosexual and heterosexual people lead equally stable and productive lives.

ARE THERE NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN RAISED BY A HOMOSEXUAL PARENT?

The answer is no. Studies comparing groups of children raised by homosexual and heterosexual parents find no differences between the two groups in their intelligence, psychological adjustment, social adjustment, popularity with friends, development of sex role identity (that is, acting and feeling feminine for girls or acting and feeling masculine for boys), or development of sexual orientation.

DO HOMOSEXUALS MOLEST CHILDREN?

No, not any more than heterosexuals or bisexuals. A nationally recognized expert on child sexual abuse, Nicholas Groth, Ph.D., stated that in his 25 years of work with child abusers, he has never encountered an instance in which a gay person with a same-sex adult partner abandoned that partner to molest a child. Researcher Paul Cameron published some studies that claim that homosexuals molest children more often

than heterosexuals. However, his methods are questioned by many psychologists and psychiatrists. The studies give no accurate information about the sexual orientation of the child molesters. Moreover, Cameron and his work have been criticized by a number of professional organizations, including the Nebraska Psychological Association, which disassociated itself from his statements on sexuality, and the American Sociological Association, which complained that he consistently misinterpreted sociological work on sexuality (Pietrzyk, 1994).

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

The current trend is to use the term **sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**. The word *infections* more accurately characterizes these conditions, which are all acquired via invasion of the body by infectious agents, through sexual contact or other means.

Types of STIs

You may be familiar with names of the most common STIs, but it may surprise you to know that there are more than 50 sexually transmitted organisms and syndromes. Although AIDS has received most of the attention lately, there are other STIs that are more prevalent. One of these is herpes, caused by the *Herpes simplex virus* (HSV). Current estimates indicate that over 100 million Americans are afflicted with oral herpes (HSV-1) and 45 million have genital herpes (HSV-2). Current estimates also suggest that there are approximately 500,000 new cases of genital herpes annually in the United States (Crooks and Baur, 2005). Genital herpes infections in the United States are more common in women (approximately one in four) than in men (one in eight).

The two most rapidly spreading STIs are genital warts, caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), and trichomoniasis, caused by a bacterium. *Chlamydia trachomatis* infection is among the most prevalent and most damaging of all STIs, because its symptoms are often mild or even absent, yet it can cause irreversible damage to reproductive organs, even leading to infertility (CDC, 2011). An estimated three to five million American men, women, and infants develop a chlamydial infection each year. Sexually active teenagers have higher infection rates than any other age group. Young women who use oral contraceptives seem to be at particularly high risk for developing a chlamydial infection if they are exposed. Chlamydial disease in the United States is transmitted primarily through sexual contact. It may also be spread by fingers from one body site to another, such as from the genitals to the eyes (Crooks and Baur, 2005).

Causes of the Increasing Infection Rate

STIs affect more than 12 million Americans each year, many of whom are teenagers. It is not entirely clear why the incidence of STIs is so high. Undoubtedly, a number of

factors, such as the following, are operating (Crooks and Baur, 2011; McAnulty and Burnette, 2003).

8. Adolescents (10 to 19 years of age), young adults (20 to 24 years of age), women, and minorities are disproportionately affected by STIs. Adolescents and young adults run the greatest risk of acquiring an STI, largely because they tend to have multiple sexual partners and engage in more risk-taking behavior. If you are a college student, now is the time to pay particular attention. Adolescents tend to deny being at risk, to have more spontaneous sex, and to use fewer preventive measures. They are also likely to be involved with the use of alcohol and other drugs, which seldom increase the likelihood of paying attention to “safer” sex practices, like condom use.

9. In general, the more partners one has, the higher the chances of being exposed to STIs because it is difficult to know whether a person is infected or has had sex with others who are at a high risk of infection.

10. It is also believed that increased use of birth control pills has contributed to the rising incidence rates by reducing the use of vaginal spermicides and condoms, contraceptive methods known to offer some protection against STIs (Crooks and Baur, 2005).

11. Although it was once believed that herpes could be transmitted only when there were lesions present, we now know that HSV can be transmitted even when there are no symptoms. The fact that many people who are infected with HSV are unaware of their infection adds to the problem. Additionally, few people know that a person who has oral sex with a partner who has a cold sore or fever blister in the mouth region may develop genital herpes of either the type-1 or type-2 variety.

12. Sometimes, early in infection, there may be no symptoms, or symptoms may be confused with other illnesses.

- Intravenous (IV) drug use puts a person at higher risk for HIV and hepatitis B because IV drug users often share needles.

Symptoms and Long-Term Effects

LONG-TERM EFFECTS STIs can cause the following long-term health problems (Crooks and Baur, 2011):

- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can damage a woman’s fallopian tubes and result in pelvic pain and sterility.
- Tubal pregnancies (in which the fetus grows in the fallopian tube instead of the womb), sometimes fatal to the mother and always fatal to the fetus.
- Cancer of the cervix in women.
- Sterility—the inability to have children—in both men and women.
- Damage to major organs, such as the heart, kidney, and brain, if STIs go untreated.
- Death, especially with HIV infection.

But, it is women and infants who suffer the most from STIs in the long term. These diseases are associated with complications such as spontaneous abortions, fetal and neonatal infections, premature labor, and gynecological cancer (McAnulty and Burnette, 2003).

SYMPTOMS See a doctor if you have any of these STI symptoms:

- Discharge from vagina, penis, or rectum.
- Pain or burning during urination or intercourse.
- Pain in the abdomen (women), testicles (men), or buttocks and legs (both).
- Blisters, open sores, warts, rash, or swelling in the genital or anal areas or mouth.
- Persistent flulike symptoms—including fever, headache, aching muscles, or swollen glands—which may precede STI symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) periodically provide updated guidelines for treating STIs. The most recent guidelines are available online at their websites. The National Sexually Transmitted Disease Hotline can be dialed toll-free from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. weekdays and from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. weekends, Pacific time. The number is (800) 227-8922.

Preventing STIs

To prevent STIs, barrier methods of contraception, such as condoms, are usually recommended. Both men and women are encouraged to carry condoms. Male condoms sold in the United States are made of either latex (rubber) or natural membrane, commonly called “lambskin” (but actually made of sheep intestine). Natural skin condoms are not as effective as latex condoms in reducing the risk of STIs because natural skin condoms have naturally occurring tiny holes or pores that viruses may be able to get through. Only latex condoms labeled for protection against STIs should be used for disease protection.

Lubrication may help prevent condoms from breaking and help prevent irritation. But lubricants do not give any added disease protection. A water-based lubricant can be used but is not required for the proper use of the condom. Do not use petroleum-based jelly, baby oils, lotions, cooking oils, or cold creams, because these products can weaken latex and cause the condom to tear easily.

Condoms should be stored in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. Closets and drawers usually make good storage places. Because of possible exposure to extreme heat and cold, glove compartments of cars are not good places to store condoms. For the same reason, condoms should not be kept in a pocket, wallet, or purse for more than a few hours at a time.

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)

Your best protection against AIDS is information. The following information will give you a current overview of what AIDS is, who has the disease, and how to prevent it,

as well as a brief history of the disease in this country. (The information comes from various excerpts from Frank D. Cox, *The AIDS Booklet*, 6th ed. Copyright © 2000 McGraw-Hill. Reprinted by permission of Times Mirror Higher Education Group, Inc. Dubuque, IA. All rights reserved.)

WHAT IS AIDS? The acronym **AIDS** stands for **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**. **Acquired** means that the conditions are not inherited but are acquired from environmental factors, such as viral infections. **Immunodeficiency** means that AIDS causes deficient immunity to other diseases. **Syndrome** means that AIDS causes several kinds of diseases, each with characteristic clusters of signs and symptoms.

Each day you come in contact with many kinds of infectious diseases, but your immune system protects you from getting sick. When you do get an infection, such as chicken pox, the immune system manufactures antibodies that help fight the infection. When you get well, your body usually becomes immune to that particular infection. This is called *acquired immunity*. It means that you will normally not get the disease again. If your immune system is damaged or destroyed, as with AIDS, the immune system does not respond properly. You are then more susceptible to the many infections and diseases that exist within the environment. A damaged immune system also fails to battle cancers. It should be emphasized that people do not die directly of AIDS, but rather of one of the many diseases, infections, or cancers that are contracted because of a weakened immune system.

The virus that causes AIDS has different names, but the term preferred by most scientists is *HIV* (human immunodeficiency virus). Although people speak of one AIDS virus, there seem to be several viruses that can cause AIDS, and its related conditions and cancers, in human beings. HIV-1 is still the most common cause of AIDS worldwide, except in West Africa, where HIV-2 is relatively common. Having the AIDS (HIV) virus in one's blood is not the same as having the full-blown disease. Most people carrying HIV in their blood remain symptom-free for several years, during which time they can infect others. Although most people carrying the AIDS virus in their blood will sooner or later develop full-blown AIDS, it is unclear at this time whether all carriers will go on to develop AIDS.

People afflicted with AIDS usually suffer from various combinations of severe weight loss, many different types of infections, and many different kinds of cancer. They often go through long illnesses that end in death one to two years after the initial diagnosis of full-blown AIDS. However, this general description does not apply to every person with AIDS. Some people with AIDS alternate between periods of sickness and periods of fairly good health, at least early after diagnosis. Other people die within a few months, although a very few have now lived eight or more years after the initial diagnosis of full-blown AIDS.

CONTRACTING THE DISEASE You may have heard about many different ways people get AIDS. Some of the stories are true, but many are false. It is unfortunate that you may be afraid of contracting AIDS when you need not be. It is even more unfortunate if you are not afraid of contracting AIDS when you should be.

HIV is primarily spread through the sharing of virus-infected lymphocytes in semen and blood. Studies of high-risk groups in the United States tell us that engaging in indiscriminate sexual activities with multiple partners is particularly dangerous because of the increased chance of exchanging virus-infected lymphocytes. Another source of infection results from IV drug sharing. AIDS is spread in a few other ways, such as through HIV-infected lymphocytes in mother's milk and occasionally through transfusion of blood or blood products, though blood donations are now routinely screened for infection. Fundamentally, it is a disease of sharing sex, sharing needles, and mixing blood. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals are at risk.

You cannot get AIDS from donating blood, and it cannot be transmitted through casual contact, such as shaking hands, hugging, or eating with an infected person.

WHO HAS AIDS? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported approximately 1,000,000 total cases in the United States by January 1, 2009, and more than 570,000 have died from the disease since it was first diagnosed in 1981. The number of new AIDS cases reported annually in the United States grew rapidly throughout the early 1980s and reached a peak rate in the middle of the decade. The rate of new AIDS diagnoses slowed in the late 1980s. Since the early 1990s an estimated 40,000 new HIV infections have occurred annually in the United States. However, recent evidence indicates that federal officials have been underestimating the number of new HIV infections by about 40 percent every year for a decade (Maugh, 2008). And, the number of new cases among teenagers, women, and racial minorities continues to rise.

The growing problem of HIV infection among adolescents has been attributed to a number of factors, including the following:

- Many teenagers have multiple sexual partners.
- Many adolescents engage in sexual activity without using a condom.
- Access to condoms is generally more difficult for adolescents.
- Teenagers have higher rates of other STIs.
- Substance abuse, which often increases risky behavior, is relatively widespread.
- Although teenagers tend to know the information about AIDS and condom use, they tend not to be able to do good risk analysis as it applies to themselves. This leads to teenagers perceiving themselves as invulnerable.

Globally, each year about 2.5 million new HIV infections occur and AIDS claims more than two million lives. As of 2007 an estimated 34 million people worldwide were

infected. Infection and death rates are declining globally due in part to the wider availability of antiretroviral drug therapy. Heterosexual contact has always been the primary form of HIV transmission worldwide (Crooks and Baur, 2011).

ORIGINS OF AIDS Evidence suggests that the current disease evolved from the form found in chimpanzees in central and southwest Africa. Humans may have contracted a form of the disease through exposure to chimpanzee blood from hunting or handling the meat during food preparation. The fact that AIDS has existed in humans for some time is supported by frozen blood samples of an adult male that were discovered in 1959. The disease, therefore, existed long before its identification in 1983. The disease spread globally with the increase in the amount of international travel (Crooks and Baur, 2005).

PREVENTING AIDS Although AIDS seems destined to become one of the most deadly epidemics humans have faced, you need not be unduly afraid. Your chances of becoming infected are near zero if you apply the following precautions (Cox, 2000):

- Sexual abstinence, especially when not involved in a caring relationship.
- Sexual fidelity.
- Use of barriers shown to prevent pregnancy as well as STIs, such as FDA-approved latex condoms that can protect a woman and a man from sharing semen and vaginal secretions during conventional vaginal intercourse, and spermicides such as nonoxynol-9, which paralyze sperm and migrant lymphocytes that

may have gotten past the barrier (a few people will have allergic reactions to specific spermicides).

- Use of barriers strictly in accordance with recommendations supplied by the FDA, as well as instructions supplied by the manufacturers.
- Avoidance of anal intercourse with or without a condom (this is the most dangerous way to share semen, and condoms are not well designed for this means of sexual expression).
- Avoidance of sexual relations with persons at great risk for having HIV or other transmissible viruses, such as persons who “shoot” drugs, have many sexual partners, or who sell or buy sex.
- Avoidance of alcohol or drugs, which interfere with your taking precautions for yourself as well as for other persons.
- Avoidance of drugs that are injected into the veins.
- Avoidance of sharing needles used for injecting drugs into the veins or handling sharp instruments contaminated with the blood of other persons.

Do not pay attention to rumors about AIDS. Whenever you have questions about AIDS or behavior that increases the chances of exposure, seek out answers from health professionals, medical clinics, teachers, counselors, and other knowledgeable sources. Last but not least, it is important that you not be lulled into a sense of complacency or apathy, encouraged by the conflicting reports on AIDS in the news media. Although significant breakthroughs are often reported, you must do all you can to protect yourself from acquiring the virus, for all real and permanent cures still remain in the distant future.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Children’s first source of information about sex is more often their peers than parents or schools.
- Abstinence-only education in school isn’t effective.
- Because of the media and the Internet, children are exposed to sexual topics and images earlier and before most of them are developmentally ready to process the information.
- STIs are more prevalent than people believe and many people with STIs don’t know they are infected.
- There is strong evidence that sexual orientation has a biological foundation.
- There is increasing acceptance of homosexuality among younger people.
- The long-term effects of sexual abuse on adult functioning are significant.

Chapter Review

PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY

There are many complex issues regarding sexuality in our society today. We are bombarded with images and messages about sex from the media when at the same time it is becoming increasingly important to be cautious about indiscriminate sexual behavior. Many of our beliefs and values are shaped by the media and our peer groups long before our parents begin to share information about sex. What parents don’t say to their children speaks as loudly as what they do say.

PEER INFLUENCES ON SEXUAL BELIEFS AND VALUES

For most people, the first source of information about sex is peers. The impact of adolescent peer pressure during high school can linger long into adulthood for some people. For many women this is a double-bind. For many men peer pressure results in learning to lie about sexual exploits.

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON SEXUAL BELIEFS AND VALUES

Many parents never talk to their children about sex. If children feel that sexuality is a part of life and it is discussed on a level appropriate for their age, they will be more likely to ask questions about what they need to know. Parents communicate values by what they don't say as well as what they do say.

SEX EDUCATION INFLUENCES

The content of sex education in schools continues to be controversial. The focus over the past 15 years has been abstinence-only education. Research has shown this to be ineffective—it doesn't decrease sexual activity, but, because of the lack of information on other topics, STIs and pregnancy rates are increasing among young people. There is a need for more and better sex education at an earlier age to counteract children learning about sex from their peers. This information needs to include contraception, the emotional implications of sexual relationships, what constitutes a good sexual relationship, and the ramifications of becoming sexual. Contrary to the belief of some people, good sex education does not necessarily lead to greater promiscuity; it can actually decrease the risk of STIs and pregnancy, and causes young adults to be more thoughtful about becoming sexual.

MEDIA AND CYBERSPACE INFLUENCES ON SEXUAL BELIEFS AND VALUES

The availability of sexual information and pornography on TV and the Internet is increasing. Some of this information is good, but much of it sensationalizes sex or presents an inaccurate picture of sexual relationships between real people. This can lead to unrealistic expectations.

INFLUENCE OF FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

The first sexual experience carries a great deal of significance for many people and represents a major life transition. It's useful to reflect on what you decided about yourself, sex, and the world in general from your first experience.

SEXUAL COERCION: HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. There are legal implications that are of the utmost importance, especially regarding behavior in the workplace. There are guidelines that are useful for knowing your rights and how to address certain situations—depending on the severity of the harassment, you can either confront the perpetrator, write a letter to the perpetrator, or file criminal charges.

SEXUAL COERCION: DATE RAPE

The incidence of rape when the victim and the assailant are known to each other is higher than previously believed. Rape is not just a stranger attacking someone on the street. Rape occurs whenever you are forced to have sex whether you know the person or not, even if you have had sex with that person before. It is important to know how to protect yourself, including handling your own drinks and being assertive when you say "No!"

SEXUAL COERCION: SEXUAL ABUSE

There is a national trend toward the acknowledgment and treatment of sexual abuse. It is far more prevalent than previously believed. Victims of abuse frequently have difficulty adjusting and coping. Friends and family of sexual abuse victims should understand the healing process in order to provide support. Memories of abuse can be recovered later in life, but we need to be careful—these memories can also be suggested and then remembered as true.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation is on a continuum from solely heterosexual, through bisexual, to solely homosexual. Sexual orientation includes more than just who a person has sex with; it includes emotions and social identity. Although the causes of sexual orientation remain speculative at this point, there is increasing scientific evidence that there is a biological predisposition to exclusive homosexuality. There are many misconceptions about homosexuals that often lead to discrimination.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Although AIDS receives the most media coverage, there are a number of other diseases that can be contracted through sexual behavior. The rate of infection for many of these diseases is increasing. The most common STIs are herpes, genital warts, Chlamydia, and trichomoniasis. AIDS is caused by infection with the HIV virus, which destroys the immune system, leaving the body vulnerable to a variety of cancers and opportunistic infections. Blood and semen are the major vehicles for transmitting the virus, which appears to be passed primarily through sexual contact and through needle sharing among IV drug users. People may significantly reduce their risk of becoming infected with HIV by following safer-sex strategies such as using latex condoms and virus-killing spermicides and by avoiding sex with multiple partners or high-risk people.

Website Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

International Federation for Gender Education (IFGE)

<http://www.ifge.org>

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

<http://www.pflag.org>

National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm>

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network

<http://www.rainn.org>

Queer Resources Directory (QRD)

<http://www.qrd.org/QRD>

Sexual Assault Information Page

<http://www.cs.utk.edu/~bartley/saInfoPage.html>

SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States)

<http://www.siecus.org>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in each chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your response to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. Did you first learn about sex from your peers? What did you learn?
2. What do you think about the sex education you received in school? What do you think needs to be included in sex education classes today? What was missing in the information you received? How early should that information be introduced?

3. When did your parents give you the “birds and the bees” talk? What did your parents convey to you about their attitudes toward sex? How did they impart their values and beliefs to you?
4. What have you learned about sexuality from the media—television, print, and cyberspace? How has it affected you?
5. When did you first see pornography and what was the source? How has it affected you?
6. If you have had sexual intercourse, what was your experience the first time? Without going into specifics, how did you react and what did you think afterward? What did you decide about yourself, the other person, and sex in general?
7. Have you or someone you know experienced date rape? Without going into specifics, how did you react and how has it affected you? How can you protect yourself from date rape?
8. Have you or someone you know experienced sexual harassment? Without going into specifics, how did you react and how has it affected you? What did you learn about the legal aspects of sexual harassment and what to do if harassment occurs?
9. Have you or someone you know been sexually abused? Without going into specifics, how did you react and how has it affected you? What did you learn in this chapter about sexual abuse? How was the information on healing useful for you?
10. What is your response to the information in this chapter about sexual orientation? Where did your beliefs about sexual orientation originate?
11. What did you learn about STIs? How does that change your behavior and beliefs? What can you do to practice safer sex in the future?

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LEARNING ABOUT ADJUSTMENT IN LIFE

We explored individual behavior in Part I and group behavior in Part II. In Part III we address issues of adjustment that occur over the period of the entire life span. The chapters in Part III explore specific issues that most people will have to confront at one time or another in everyday life, and provide suggestions for coping with these issues.

“I gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which I stop and look fear in the face. . . . I say to myself, I’ve lived through this and can take the next thing that comes along. . . . We must do the thing we think we cannot do.”

Eleanor Roosevelt



9

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND COPING SKILLS

Lloyd lost over a quarter of a million dollars in the legal battle over his father's Trust. His brother had been the trustee previously, but had died of cancer in the spring, just three months before his father passed away at 86. His father, Roy, had decided to make changes in his Trust after appointing Lloyd as the new trustee. Lloyd patiently worked with his father about what he wanted to do regarding the distribution of assets to his siblings, the wife of his deceased brother, and a stepsister from his father's previous marriage. But, before anything could be finalized, his father fell and broke his hip.

Given the concern for his father's health and ability to make it through the operation, Lloyd decided to have Roy sign a Will so he could make the changes that they had discussed. It was signed by a notary public and two witnesses who heard his father agree to the conditions. The Will would later be deemed to be a legitimate amendment to the Trust, but this was only the beginning of a long-drawn-out battle that would end years later with massive legal fees for everyone involved.

A disgruntled sister-in-law decided to challenge the distribution from the Trust because she was receiving less than she thought she should. And, a stepsister that he had never met came forward. Roy had intended to leave her something, but was inclined to have it be a lesser amount than was previously in the Trust because his father said that he hadn't heard from her in over eight years. But, together the sister-in-law and stepsister hired a lawyer to challenge the legitimacy of the new Will.

The stress of dealing with a highly charged emotional situation began to take its toll. Lloyd had been having serious misgivings about his marriage for years, long before the legal battles began. But, the loss of his brother and father within three months brought things into focus. He began to realize more fully how short and tenuous life is and decided it was time to make a move. He filed for divorce before he realized what the implications of a trial about the Trust would be, or how complicated the divorce proceedings would become.

While Lloyd's wife wasn't particularly happy with their marriage either—they had talked about divorce a dozen times—she was extremely angry when he finally left. She demanded the lion's share of their assets and seemed intent on punishing him for having the courage to be the one to pull the plug. Not having the energy to fight a war on two fronts, he reluctantly agreed to the terms of the settlement. It was less than a month later that he saw the *for sale* sign on the house listing it for \$300,000 more than the price they had used in the division of their assets.

But, that wasn't the low point. It was only when he found out that his teenage son had been arrested for drug possession that he decided it was time to seek help. There were just too many things happening at once and he felt like he couldn't take it anymore. Fortunately, his place of employment had an Employee Assistance Program that offered counseling services. Many of his friends had thought he would be hitting the bottle as a means of coping, but Lloyd knew that this was not the time to be making things worse.

In his sessions with a counselor, Lloyd began to talk about his feelings of anxiety and depression. The counselor encouraged him to talk with his doctor about the possible use of medications that would help with the transitions and changes in his life. They also talked about how important it would be for him to take care of himself physically. Lloyd knew that he hadn't been eating right and that although a fast-food diet and beer might seem to make him feel better, it was only temporary. He began to make sure that he had enough sleep and even started trying meditation techniques for controlling the worries that were replaying over and over in his mind.

Though it would be a few more years before the fallout from all the ensuing financial difficulties would be over, Lloyd began to make changes in his lifestyle and made plans for how to live on a limited budget. He found that his new exercise plan really did help him feel better, and it also gave him a sense of control over some aspect of his life. He began to pursue new hobbies and broadened his circle of friends. It was a difficult time, but he came out the other end of the storm with renewed energy for taking things one day at a time. And, it helped him put things in perspective about what is really important, and really be able to say to himself, “It’s only money.”

Everyone is going to encounter circumstances that are frustrating, stressful, and seemingly inequitable. The bigger the repertoire of coping strategies you have, the better off you’ll be when these situations arise for you. In this chapter we consider various aspects of coping: health and wellness to give you the reserves you need to cope effectively, coping strategies to deal with difficult situations, and the self-defeating behaviors that interfere with being able to use coping strategies well. Finally I discuss what to do if your coping strategies aren’t enough and you need to seek professional help.

Discussion In the story that began this chapter, Lloyd found the reserves to avoid self-defeating behavior like drinking to numb his anxiety, began exercising to build up his energy to productively deal with problems, and sought professional help when he felt he was “going under,” overwhelmed by his troubles.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 9

By the end of the chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Describe the three parts of the *biopsychosocial* model of health. What is more of a threat to our health and well-being than contagious diseases?
2. From the sections under *Bad Habits and Health* describe the three things that contribute to poor health.
3. In the section *Lifestyle and Being Overweight*, describe the factors that have contributed to the global epidemic of obesity. What are the consequences of weight-related problems?
4. In Harvard’s *Healthy Eating Pyramid*, which foods should be eaten most often and which should be eaten sparingly? Why?
5. What is the definition of *self-defeating behavior* and why is it important to understand this concept?
6. Define *limiting beliefs*, *self-defeating behavior*, *self-handicapping*, *passive self-defeat*, *high-anxiety avoidance*, and *fear of change*.
7. What is the definition of *learned helplessness* and what can a human do so that he doesn’t act like the dog?
8. What are the two general forms of *coping*?
9. Describe three ineffective coping strategies.
10. Describe six coping strategies from the section *Effective Coping*.
11. What is the definition of *self-fulfilling prophecy* and what is the implication for cognitive restructuring?
12. What are five ways to develop *self-efficacy*?
13. Define *conflict management* and describe the two types of negotiation. Which is more useful?
14. What are the five categories of psychological disorders listed in the text?
15. Describe four guidelines for getting professional help.

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material, make notes on constructs and also on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE

Your physical well-being directly affects your mental health, which in turn affects the interactions you have with other people. When you aren’t feeling well, you are more susceptible to being argumentative, less patient, overly sensitive, and uncooperative. An important factor in having good interactions with others is the level of energy that you are experiencing at the time. And, energy comes from taking care of your health.

Perhaps this sounds a bit overstated, but consider the following questions: When are you most susceptible to getting “hooked” by others and ending up in negative

interactions? When are you most irritable, short-tempered, and dissatisfied with the world in general? When are you most unable to cope with life’s frustrations? For most of us, we are less able to cope when we feel drained and low on energy. We don’t want the world to require one more thing of us, and it seems to take an extra amount of effort just to accomplish ordinary daily tasks.

Conversely, when we have an abundance of energy, it seems that moving through life is more effortless. Even the events, behaviors, and people who usually bother us don’t have much impact. When we do have difficult situations to contend with, we are usually more patient and able to think clearly and take an appropriate course of action.

Given that the amount of energy we have is central to productive behavior, it is valuable to explore the various methods for creating and maintaining the energy that comes from being healthy. **Self-care** is a term used to describe being aware of and taking care of our bodies.

But wellness means more than just taking care of your physical being. Part of being healthy and having good energy means paying attention to and understanding the social psychological factors that influence health. When you take a comprehensive view of health, you will be better able to use the coping skills that you have as well as explore the use of new ones that are offered in this chapter.

Comprehensive View of Health

There was a time when illness was thought to be mainly biological in origin: germs and viruses caused people to get sick, or they had some inherited characteristic that contributed to being susceptible to some disease. But, illness is not just caused by *biological* factors. Decades of research have shown that health is directly connected to *social* and *psychological* factors. This was discussed previously in Chapter 4, in the section on stress and the resulting physiological changes that occur as a result of being in a continuously stressful situation.

Contagious diseases, such as measles, polio, and smallpox, are *not* what is killing Americans; rather, it is *chronic disease* such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke which cause the most deaths per year in the United States (CDC, 2007). The largest contributor to these conditions, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is tobacco (CDC, accessed 2011). So, it appears that what is killing us is not contagious diseases, but our lifestyle. How we choose to live, and the daily choices that we make, have a significant impact on our well-being. Consider what would need to be different if you were to take more charge of your health.

Health psychologists focus on how biological, psychological, and social factors interact to influence one's health for better or worse. The following comprise the three aspects of this **biopsychosocial** model of wellness:

1. **Biological:** Genetic predisposition, infectious agents, immune response, and physiological reactivity.
2. **Psychological:** Stress, personality type, health habits, and coping tactics.
3. **Social:** Sanitation, medical care, pollution control, social support, and health education.

The following information may be useful in beginning to make a plan for the area you need to focus on most.

Bad Habits and Health

One of the main ways to improve your health is to stop doing the things that contribute to poor health: smoking, alcohol, and drugs.

SMOKING Some people forget that nicotine is a drug. And, according to many people who have been long-term smokers, it is one of the most addictive habits. I've known people in drug rehabilitation who have said that quitting smoking was more difficult than getting off hard drugs like heroin. Though the number of people smoking cigarettes declined steadily from 43 percent in 1965 to 20.9 percent in 2005, this decline has recently stalled; about 20.6 percent of adults and 20 percent of high school students smoked in 2009 (CDC, accessed 2011). In 2009 about 46.6 million American adults smoked and 88 million more were exposed to secondhand smoke. Although some tobacco users are switching to smokeless tobacco—chewing tobacco and snuff (according to the CDC, about 3.5 percent of adults and 6.1 percent of high school students used these in 2009)—the inherent dangers are the same as they are for smoking cigarettes. Nicotine increases the chances of (CDC, accessed May 11, 2011):

- Coronary heart disease by two to four times
- Stroke by two to four times
- Men developing lung cancer by 23 times
- Women developing lung cancer by 13 times
- Dying from chronic obstructive lung diseases (such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema) by 12 to 13 times.

Quitting has immediate benefits. I bet you didn't know the following (Thompson, 2011):

- 20 minutes after quitting, your blood pressure returns to normal.
- 8 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide levels in your blood stream are cut by half and your blood oxygen level returns to normal.
- In 48 hours, your chance of having a heart attack will begin its long decline; all nicotine will have left your body; your smell and sense of taste will have returned to normal.
- In 72 hours your bronchial tubes will relax and your energy level will return to normal.
- In two weeks your circulation will increase and it will continue to improve for the next 10 weeks.
- In three to nine months coughing, wheezing, and breathing problems will dissipate as your lung capacity improves by 10 percent.
- In one year your chance of a heart attack will have dropped by a half.
- In five years your chance of having a stroke will have returned to that of a non-smoker.
- In 10 years your chance of having cancer will have returned to that of a non-smoker.
- In 15 years your chance of having a heart attack will have returned to that of a non-smoker.

But, why do people continue to smoke in the face of all the evidence that it is harmful? Besides the chemical dependency, there are social reasons. If you smoke, you have an immediate friend when you go to the smoking area.

If you have difficulty starting conversations, you might find a haven in easy topics of conversation with other smokers. You can talk about how awful it is that you have to be outside, how no one should be able to tell you what to do, how hard it is to be a smoker these days, or how hard it is to quit. Have you noticed that as the number of smokers decreases, it seems as though the ones who still do smoke bond more tightly together and are more militant? It appears that for some people it is still a method of rebellion.

If you are intent on stopping, which you may have tried more than once, here are some suggestions:

- Make sure that you have a strong reason to quit, and that it is one of your own. The motivation has to come from within you rather than from outside pressure.
- Make sure that you monitor the settings in which you usually smoke, and avoid or modify those situations.
- Don't give in to the urge to have "just one more" while quitting. Once you have stopped, make it for good.
- Try a **nicotine substitute**—the pills, gum, skin patches, and inhalers that help a person who is trying to quit. There is evidence that these increase the long-term rate of quitting (Stead et al., 2008).
- Consider what smoking is doing for you—the social and psychological needs it is filling. Consider other ways that these needs can be met. (I'll talk about this more in Chapter 11.)

DRINKING Although information on the dangers of alcohol and drugs is readily available, people, especially college students, continue to use and abuse these substances. Alcohol and drinking are a large part of our culture and many of our social rituals. Weddings, reunions, parties, and sporting events all come with the expected drinks. Is it any wonder that people expect to drink a lot, or simply succumb to peer pressure, when they are at college?

While you may not consider yourself an alcoholic, you may still engage in binge drinking. Some students believe that if they have refrained from drinking during the week while attending classes and doing their studies, it's all right to make up for it on the weekends. In an eight-year study of college students (1993–2001), researchers found that the rate of binge drinking held steady at 44 percent (Wechsler et al., 2002). Binge drinking was defined as having five drinks in a row for men and four for women. The incidence of such drinking patterns was significantly higher for those in fraternities or sororities.

Besides the negative effect on intellectual functioning and motor control that makes driving while intoxicated such a bad idea, alcohol lowers inhibition for behaviors that one would otherwise not indulge in. Ninety percent of rape cases and 95 percent of violent crimes on campus involve alcohol. In our society at large, there are a variety of crimes that are more likely to occur with the

use of alcohol, and it is also indicated in suicide attempts (Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012).

If you have had problems on the job, in school, or with personal relationships that have been tied to the use of alcohol, you may want to consider the following in an attempt to curb your use:

- **Pay attention to what others are saying to you:** If your friends, parents, or others who care about you are telling you repeatedly that you have a problem, or there are things that you can't remember doing, then you may need help.
- **Spend time with people for whom it is acceptable to not drink:** Find friends who don't make you feel uncomfortable if you don't drink. And, if you aren't comfortable being around people unless you drink, that could be an indicator that you need help.
- **Refrain from having the refrigerator stocked with beer and wine:** Make it difficult to have access to alcoholic beverages.
- **Seek help:** If your life is in turmoil because of your behavior while you are drinking, admit that you have a problem and seek help. There are often counseling services available on campus.
- **Consider what drinking is doing for you:** Is drinking making you feel calmer, more confident, or more able to have fun? Are there other ways to achieve these goals?

DRUGS Some students believe that their involvement with drugs is just recreational, but whatever the drug of choice, it can easily become abused. Most drugs produce a **tolerance effect**. This means that with prolonged use it takes more of the drug to produce the same effect. As the person builds up a tolerance for the drug, it takes more and more to create the previous experience; this can lead to overdoses. Many people are familiar with the concept of **physical dependence** that exists when a person has to continue to take the drug in order to avoid withdrawal. (The symptoms of withdrawal can be



extremely unpleasant and include vomiting, chills, convulsions, and severe aches and pains.) **Psychological dependence** is more subtle, and occurs when a person feels compelled to continue to use the drug because of intense emotional and mental craving for it. He or she may be unable to stop himself or herself from using because it makes them feel good, more confident, calmer, or less inhibited.

Psychoactive drugs are usually considered to be in three categories: depressants, stimulants, and hallucinogens.

1. **Depressants:** Drugs that slow everything down, including your breathing and central nervous system. The most common of these are tranquilizers, barbiturates, and alcohol.
2. **Stimulants:** Drugs that speed everything up, including your central nervous system. The most common drugs in this category are caffeine, nicotine, amphetamine, and cocaine.
3. **Hallucinogens:** Drugs that create changes in perceptions, thoughts, or mood. They alter a person's perceptual experience and produce various reactions, from enjoyment to fear. Hallucinogens include LSD (acid), PCP (Angel Dust), peyote, and psilocybin mushrooms.

People get involved with drugs for a number of reasons including boredom, fatigue, and to relieve tension. The latter is often the case for students who are feeling overwhelmed with the pressure of school. But, as with alcohol use, drug use can lead to other problems that create even more anxiety. Some people take drugs because it seems to make it easier to interact with other people. But, if this is your only means for dealing with the harsh realities of life, you may do better to develop more and better coping skills, because drugs only create the illusion of making things better when they are really making things worse.

Lifestyle and Being Overweight

Less exercise and higher consumption of foods rich in fat and carbohydrates have created a global epidemic of obesity. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) states that there were one and a half billion overweight adults in 2010, at least 300 million of which were clinically obese. Further, 43 million children under age 5 were overweight in 2008. WHO states that obesity and overweight affect more people than malnutrition and hunger. In the United States in 2008, 32.2 percent of adult men and 35.5 percent of adult women were obese (Flegal et al., 2010).

Many speculate that this trend will continue, particularly when we consider the incidence of obesity among children and adolescents. According to the CDC (2011) the percentage of obese children aged 6–10 grew from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 19.6 percent in 2008. A similar trend occurred among adolescents aged 12–19, rising from 5 percent in 1980 to 18.1 percent in 2008. Multiple studies

have shown that obese children are likely to become obese adults (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, accessed June 2011a,b).

COSTS OF WEIGHT-RELATED PROBLEMS Obesity and overweight problems carry serious direct and indirect social and economic consequences. Direct costs include those for preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a consortium of countries worldwide, estimates that health care costs are 25 percent higher for obese patients than for those with normal weight (OECD, accessed June 2011a). In the United States health care costs for overweight and obese individuals average 37 percent more than for people of normal weight, adding an average of \$732 to the annual medical bills of each American. Estimated medical costs connected to obesity and smoking each account for about 9.1 percent of all health expenditures in the United States (Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn, and Wang, 2003).

Indirect costs include earnings (multiple studies have shown that obesity negatively affects earnings and wages, particularly for females (Cawley, 2004), and losses in labor-force participation due to increases in health-related problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, stroke, and depression. The OECD estimates that obese people live an average of 8–10 years less than people of normal weight (OECD, accessed June 2011a).

EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM Leaving genetics aside, weight-related problems are caused by the difference between calories consumed and calories used.

Reasons for the higher intake of calories include the growth in fast-food and soft-drink consumption, increases in serving sizes, and more snacks consumed outside regular meals (Cutler, Glaesar, and Shapiro, 2003). Some also speculate that the participation of both spouses in the labor market results in healthier home-cooked dinners being replaced by TV dinners or restaurant dinners—which frequently take place in fast-food restaurants. For some people, obesity also has a psychological cause; being fat could be an unconscious protection against abuse or the fear of intimacy, or eating could be used as an unhealthy coping mechanism.

In terms of calories expended, researchers emphasize the role of reduced physical activity and technological change—products of the transition from rural to urban societies—as well as a higher rate of passive entertainment. Lakdawalla and Philipson (2002) concluded that a worker who spends his or her career in a sedentary job will be heavier than someone in a highly active job. Further, they estimated that about 40 percent of the total growth in weight in the United States may be due to increased calorie intake, potentially through increased food abundance (agricultural innovation), and about 60 percent may be due to a decrease in physical activity.

Another potential explanation for the imbalance between calories consumed and calories used relates to the consequences of becoming a more industrialized society. Chou, Grossman, and Saffer (2004) point out that in industrialized societies, workers sell more of their time to the labor market and have less disposable time for entertainment and other household activities (including food preparation). This lack of time may explain the growth of fast-food restaurants in the United States. Their results indicate that it is not only restaurant availability and restaurant food prices that matter when explaining weight gain; certain sociodemographic characteristics also contribute. In particular, they conclude that wealthier and more educated individuals are less likely to have obesity problems, whereas black and Hispanic people are more likely to suffer from obesity or have higher weight.

Cultural differences might also contribute to the spread of obesity and weight-related problems around the world. For instance, the spirit of massive consumption and the idea of “getting a good value for your money” are more characteristic of some countries than others. In addition, effects related to the imitation of Western lifestyles are also different, depending on the degree of reception and adoption of these new cultural habits, which include the consumption of fast food, sodas, and snacks. Finally, in some places, weight is considered desirable because it indicates wealth.

Finally, there are physiological causes for weight gain. Hunger and weight gain per calorie consumed all increase when sleep rhythms are disrupted and stress increases (Hurley, 2011). There is truth to the fact that metabolisms speed up and slow down depending on the circumstances.

Thus, all evidence shows that obesity is a complex phenomenon, linked not only to the demand and supply conditions of food products, but also to economic transitions and cultural change in societies. Besides, we’re wired to eat; overindulging when food supplies are abundant makes sense if there are periodic times when food supplies are not abundant. Unfortunately, these days, food is always abundant. Add to this the subtle changes in brain chemistry and functioning when one is overweight (all of which conspire to keep fat on; Hurley, 2011) and there are the perfect conditions for an obesity epidemic.

All these factors make solutions difficult. It’s not just a matter of eating less and exercising more, it also seems to depend on stress, getting more sleep, and turning off brain mechanisms that are wired to feel more hunger and more pleasure when eating. Until medical science finds more effective treatments such as hormones and electrical stimulation to parts of the brain, there are the tried and true things you can do to manage weight and increase energy: eat better, get more exercise, sleep more, and control stress. You might also try laughing more. Laughter boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, and reduces stress (Angelle, 2010).

EATING BETTER One way to take care of your body is to pay attention to the kind of fuel you put into it. Few of us

Thought Question 9.1

What lifestyle changes should you make? What is keeping you from making these changes?

would expect our cars to run on substandard gas, yet we insist on filling ourselves with food that results in poor performance. Although most of us know quite a bit about what we should and should not eat, we frequently ignore our knowledge. The next time you reach for something that you know isn’t good for you, consider the following:

- How will this make me feel in an hour?
- How does this contribute to my energy level in the long run?
- How might this affect my weight or appearance?
- Am I really hungry?
- Am I trying to satisfy some other need?

Building a Better Pyramid We’re all familiar with the **food pyramid** provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which was an attempt to describe what foods we should eat more and less of. Advances in the field of nutrition have resulted in the need to revise the pyramid. The Harvard School of Public Health published the **Healthy Eating Pyramid** (Willett and Skerrett, 2005) to describe these changes. The Healthy Eating Pyramid sits on a foundation of daily exercise and weight control because these two related elements strongly influence your chances of staying healthy. They also affect what and how you eat and how your food affects you. The elements of the Healthy Eating Pyramid include the following:

- **Whole grain foods:** The body needs carbohydrates mainly for energy. The best sources of carbohydrates are whole grains such as oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice. The body can’t digest whole grains as quickly as it can highly processed carbohydrates such as white flour. This keeps blood sugar and insulin levels from rising, then falling, too quickly. Better control of blood sugar and insulin can keep hunger at bay and may prevent the development of type 2 diabetes.

• **Plant oils:** Surprised that the Healthy Eating Pyramid puts some fats near the base, indicating they are OK to eat? This is because we get one third or more of our daily calories from fats. Note, though, that not all types of fat are good; rather, we should eat plant oils such as olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, peanut, and other vegetable oils, as well as fatty fish such as salmon. These healthy fats not only improve cholesterol levels (when eaten in place of highly processed carbohydrates) but can also protect the heart from sudden and potentially deadly arrhythmias.

• **Vegetables (in abundance) and fruits (two to three servings daily):** A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can decrease the chances of having a heart attack or stroke, protect against a variety of cancers, lower blood pressure, help you avoid the painful intestinal ailment called diverticulitis, and guard against cataracts and macular degeneration (the major cause of vision loss among people over age 65).

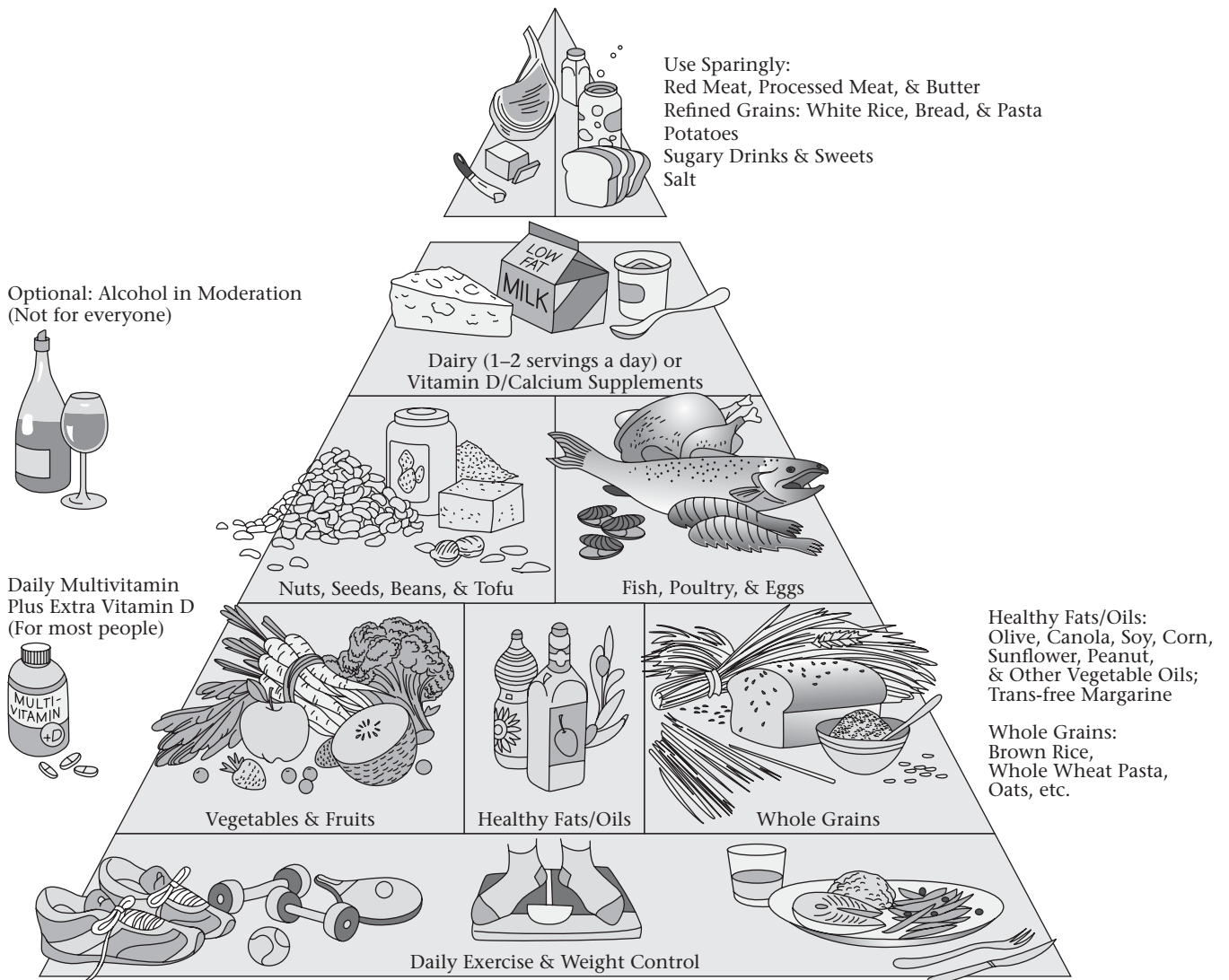
• **Fish, poultry, and eggs (zero to two servings daily):** These are important sources of protein. A wealth of research suggests that eating fish can reduce the risk of heart disease. Chicken and turkey are also good sources of protein and can be low in saturated fat. Eggs, which have long been demonized because they contain fairly high levels of cholesterol, aren't as bad as they're cracked up to be. In fact, an egg is a much better breakfast than a doughnut cooked in an oil rich in trans fats or a bagel made from refined flour.

• **Nuts and legumes (one to three servings daily):** Nuts and legumes (beans) are excellent sources of protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats.

• **Dairy or calcium supplement (one to two servings daily):** Building bone and keeping it strong takes calcium, vitamin D, and exercise. Dairy products

THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health



have traditionally been Americans' main source of calcium. But milk and cheese can contain a lot of saturated fat. Three glasses of whole milk, for example, contain as much saturated fat as 13 strips of cooked bacon. If you enjoy dairy foods, try to stick with no-fat or low-fat products. If you don't like dairy products, calcium supplements offer an easy and inexpensive way to get your daily calcium.

- **Red meat and butter (use sparingly):** These sit at the top of the Healthy Eating Pyramid because they contain lots of saturated fat. If you eat red meat every day, switching to fish or chicken several times a week can improve cholesterol levels. So can switching from butter to olive oil.

- **White rice, white bread, potatoes, pasta, and sweets (use sparingly):** These can cause fast and furious increases in blood sugar that can lead to weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic disorders. Whole-grain carbohydrates cause slower, steadier increases in blood sugar that don't overwhelm the body's ability to handle these much needed but potentially dangerous nutrients.

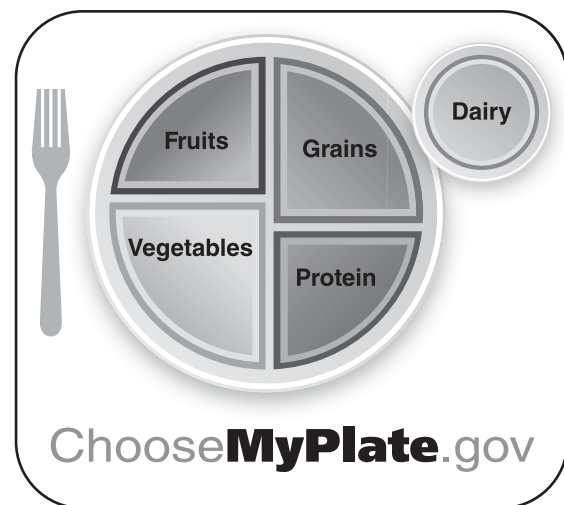
- **Multiple vitamins:** A daily multivitamin and multimineral supplement offers a kind of nutritional backup. Although it can't replace healthy eating, or make up for unhealthy eating, it can fill in the nutrient holes that may sometimes affect even the most careful eaters. You don't need an expensive name-brand or designer vitamin. A standard, store-brand is fine. Look for one that meets the requirements of the USP (U.S. Pharmacopeia), an organization that sets standards for drugs and supplements.

- **Alcohol (in moderation):** Scores of studies suggest that having an alcoholic drink a day lowers the risk of heart disease. Moderation is clearly important, since alcohol has risks as well as benefits. For men, a good balance point is one to two drinks a day. For women, it's at most one drink a day.

The USDA has tried a couple of different diagrams to describe recent understanding of what we should eat. It's most current (June, 2011) is called MyPlate. This reflects much of the same information as in the Healthy Eating Pyramid, but it is simplified and in the shape of a plate. The diagram provides a visual reminder to fill your plate with a little more than $\frac{1}{4}$ vegetables, a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ fruit, $\frac{1}{4}$ grains (make at least half of them "whole"), and $\frac{1}{4}$ lean protein. Add a glass of 1% or non-fat milk and you have a health balanced diet. Some people like it better than the pyramid because it's simple.

MyPlate is built on the premise that consumers need simple and actionable items. Therefore, the icon itself purposefully doesn't contain many messages. Some concepts presented on the website www.choosemyplate.gov are: balance your calories, avoid oversized portions, switch to fat-free or low fat milk, and drink water instead of sugary drinks.

While it may be unlikely that release of a new government icon will transform Americans' poor dietary habits into a model of good nutrition, most Americans will get the idea that they should eat a balanced diet



with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. And, it reminds everyone that portion control is an essential piece of any waistline-trimming campaign.

EXERCISE In addition to helping with weight problems, dozens of studies link regular physical exercise with lower levels of depression and anxiety. People who exercise regularly are less depressed, but could it also be that people who are more depressed exercise less? To demonstrate a causal link between exercise and depression, McCann and Holmes (1984) performed an experiment with women students at the University of Kansas. Students were randomly assigned either to an exercise group, involving running and aerobic exercise, or to a control group, which involved no exercise program. Before the experiment began, the women were tested to measure the degree of their depression. Later, they were retested, once after five weeks of the exercise program and again after 10 weeks. Results showed that only the students in the exercise group became markedly less depressed.

It is not clear how or why exercise affects depression. Some explanations focus on the changes in body and brain chemistry, resulting in rising levels of endorphins in the blood. It is hypothesized that endorphins, as well as the neurotransmitter serotonin, are responsible for the well-being and inner peace. Other explanations suggest that the sense of mastery over one's body gained through exercise may contribute to a greater sense of personal control over other aspects of one's life as well, thereby alleviating the passivity and helplessness often found in depressed people (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

CONCLUSIONS Population and consumption data reveal that physiological, socioeconomic, and cultural factors are affecting the spread of obesity around the world. Although economists have recently started exploring the economic causes and consequences of obesity, providing a solution to this problem may require a complex vision that incorporates more than economic incentives to help consumers eat healthier foods (such as providing mandatory nutritional food information, taxing food products with high levels of sugars, carbohydrates, and fats, or subsidizing certain fruits and vegetables for lower-income groups).

Given that both consumption and expenditure of calories matter, new health policies promoting more active lifestyles should be put forward by all countries affected by the obesity epidemic. This would alleviate the symptoms of new sedentary lifestyles common to all industrialized countries. The fight against weight problems may also require having an understanding of the sociological perspectives of cultural change and economic growth, reminding individuals that “they are what they eat.”

SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIOR

People are often experts at getting exactly what they say they don't want. As introduced in previous chapters, we all at times contribute to our own unhappiness. In this section, we will continue to explore how to identify and minimize self-defeating behavior patterns, including learned helplessness and limiting beliefs, which interfere with your ability to cope. Understanding these concepts is a prerequisite to learning coping skills and making changes in your life. When dealing with the complexities of everyday living, there are two general approaches for making life go more smoothly: Stop doing what doesn't work, and start doing what does!

Limiting Beliefs

Self-defeating behavior is saying you want something and then proceeding to do things that increase the likelihood that it won't happen. For example, I knew a woman who was sure that her needs wouldn't be met in a relationship. In fact, in her birth family it wasn't OK to acknowledge that one had needs at all, and even if one did, it was an imposition on others to ask that they be met. Her belief was that a person should take care of his or her own needs and not ask for help from others.

Now bring this forward into adulthood. In her marriage, every time she felt slighted, overworked, or underappreciated, she became angry and critical of her partner, implying how worthless he was. After all, only an insensitive and uncaring man wouldn't try to notice her needs and help to address them. Her attacks only served to make it more unlikely that her partner would want to do what she wanted. In the attempt to make sure her needs got met, she did things to lessen the chances that they would be met.

Through counseling this woman discovered that her partner really wanted to make sure her needs were met, but he didn't know what they were, and didn't understand the source of her anger. He wasn't uncaring and insensitive, he simply didn't know. The solution was to accept the fact that it is all right to have needs and to ask that they be met. She also learned techniques to communicate needs without making others wrong. To her surprise, when she started treating her partner with respect, he became more willing to make sure she was happy.

Many psychologists and counselors believe such behavior is often rooted in largely unconscious preconceived old notions about who one is and what one can have in life. Then one acts in ways that make these expectations come true.

Another manifestation of self-defeating behavior is described by Steve Berglas, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School and author of *The Success Syndrome* (1991). He uses the term **self-handicapping**. When people fear failure or the inability to sustain success, they create an impediment, or handicap, that makes success less likely. Then, if they do fail, they can blame it on the external impediment rather than some internal flaw of character or ability. If they succeed, then all the better, because they have done it despite the obstacle. This strategy is attractive because of its apparent win-win aspect.

The unconscious intention of self-handicapping is to shift the blame for an anticipated negative outcome from something more central to one's sense of self-esteem to something less central. Thus, no matter what happens, a person can protect his or her sense of self-esteem. Unfortunately, this pattern may work only in the immediate situation. In the long run, continually creating obstacles in one's life may have the opposite effect and lower self-esteem.

PASSIVE SELF-DEFEAT Not all self-defeating behavior is as dramatic as the examples above or the case study about Sally in the text box. According to Berglas (1991), most people are more subtle. Withdrawing, dropping out, procrastinating, indecisiveness, obsessive planning but never getting to the act itself—all may be tactics for passive self-defeat. The most commonly used method of all, guaranteed as a self-defeating ploy, is just not trying very hard in the first place. People who coast along through life with a mediocre existence can always reassure themselves that they have been inadequately judged. After all, they never really gave it their all. Berglas feels that many of these behaviors may be due in part to faulty early feedback. In some families, parental praise is inconsistent, indiscriminate, or inadequate. In such families, a person is left with high expectations but little understanding of how to replicate the rewards he or she already received. Consequently, he or she may withdraw and put forth less effort.

HIGH-ANXIETY AVOIDANCE The amount of anxiety generated by the possibility of failure or success greatly influences a person's willingness to try. In some families, it is risky to attempt new activities for fear of being criticized or humiliated. It may seem safer to not make decisions rather than risk doing or saying the wrong thing. Some children get the message, correctly or not, that they will be loved only if they are successful. The resulting fear of losing love contributes to their lack of ability or willingness to attempt the very behaviors that could make them more successful.

FEAR OF CHANGE Underlying self-defeating behavior may be the fear of change itself. This is true even when the change is for the better. Many people become so attached to their particular way of being that they even mourn the loss of unhealthy patterns. It is a case of “old chains become familiar friends.” For example, some psychiatric inpatients nearing completion of treatment suddenly develop new

Case Studies and Student Stories

Sally is tired of being treated like a doormat and wants to change her behavior. When asked why she doesn't stand up for herself, she replies, "If I were to say what I want and what I am feeling, I might hurt someone else's feelings." Sally often feels responsible for everyone around her, whether she actually is or not.

Whenever she thinks someone is in need or has hurt feelings, she feels duty bound to help that person. She has a self-imposed agenda of taking care of everyone's feelings except her own. When confronted with that, she says, "If I weren't taking care of other people and trying to protect them from having any bad feelings, then that would be proof that I was selfish—and people wouldn't like me." Apparently, part of being a doormat is avoiding disapproval from anyone at all costs.

When it is pointed out to Sally that it may not be possible to be how she would like to be and still avoid the disapproval of others at all times, she gets confused. She wants to make changes to stop being a doormat, but, because she thinks she must not upset anyone while making those changes, she is in a quandary. She even gets confused about being confused, because she knows that she wants to change yet doesn't think she can. After thinking about what being confused does for her, she realizes that it keeps her from having to take action. If she is confused, then no one will blame her or disapprove if she continues to do

nothing. How can she be expected to act if she doesn't know what to do?

When asked what it does for her to not have to take action to deal with the problem of how she is treated, she says, "I don't have to deal with any conflicts." It is very important to her not to have any conflict so as to avoid the possibility of dealing with someone's anger. Paradoxically, by avoiding conflict and the possibility of any expression of anger, she gets mad at herself. The anger that she feels toward others gets directed inward.

The more she blames herself for her situation in life and the way others treat her, the more depressed she becomes. The more depressed she becomes, the more she feels she deserves to be treated like a doormat. And the more she feels and acts that way, the more people in her world treat her accordingly.

Sally is caught in a cycle of self-defeating behaviors. Each part of the cycle is supported by the beliefs and subsequent behavior of the previous step. To interrupt the vicious cycle that is limiting her life, Sally needs to learn new coping skills. It would benefit her to learn new methods of coping with anxiety, emotions, conflict, and the fear of rejection or disapproval.

Source: Juanita Woods.

symptoms that may delay their release from the hospital. There are also many people in the general population who would rather continue doing something that doesn't work well than risk trying something new. One antidote is to seek honest feedback from friends about trying new behaviors and the potential outcomes. Perhaps new information or a different perspective can be useful in reassessing one's abilities. Friends can also be supportive of the need to stretch oneself. There are often rewards for doing so. Positive self-esteem results from personal recognition that one is competent, and this feeling is derived from actually behaving in a more skilled manner. By taking risks to overcome old patterns of behavior, even when the intended outcome isn't accomplished, one can develop more of the "I can do it" attitude. That feeling may be one of the keys to breaking the self-defeating cycle. It is even possible to give oneself positive feedback and rewards for just taking a risk, regardless of the outcome, because that in itself is a change and constitutes new behavior. Berglas suggests practicing risk-taking in relatively safe settings, perhaps those that aren't very public or aren't in critical areas of life.

Learned Helplessness

Many patterns of self-defeating behavior are the result of past experiences that made people feel as though they had little control over aversive situations. This results in a construct called **learned helplessness**, studied by Martin Seligman (1975). The following example was presented in *Innovations Abstracts* (Vol. II, No. 25), a publication of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development at the University of Texas at Austin. It was written by John Rouche, the director of the Program in Community College Education:

A dog is placed in a large experimental box. A current of electricity, painful but not physically harmful, jolts the animal. He moves about frantically for about thirty seconds then lies down, whines, and passively accepts the shock. He does not look for the escape route that is available. After a full minute, the shock is over. A second dog is placed in the same box. He, too, frantically tries to escape the shock but he keeps looking until he discovers the escape route and crosses the barrier to the shock-free side of the box.

The difference? Before he was placed in the experimental box, the first dog had been strapped in a hammock and given shock that he couldn't control or avoid. The second dog had received no previous shock. The experiment suggested that it was the inability to control the shock that produced passivity. The lesson of the learned helplessness findings, demonstrated in similar laboratory experiments, is that when an organism experiences trauma it can't control, its motivation to respond in the face of later trauma wanes.

Later, when Seligman tried to rehabilitate the passive, helpless dog, a whole series of persuasive maneuvers failed. For example, they removed the barrier between compartments, making it easy for the dog to reach safety. The dog did not move. One experimenter stood on the box's safe side and called and coaxed the dog. He did not come. Food was placed on the safe side to tantalize him to safety, over and over again. Finally, after dragging the dog to the safe side as many as one hundred times, the dog began to respond. Fortunately, the animal's recovery was complete.

APPLICATIONS TO HUMAN BEHAVIOR For people who have developed patterns of learned helplessness, the motivation to respond, especially in a new situation, is diminished to the point that they may no longer be willing to try. For example, I encountered foster parents who noticed that their one-year-old foster child would make no noise when he woke up. He merely stood silently in his crib until someone noticed that he was awake. Upon checking his background, the foster parents discovered that the child had been largely ignored by his birth parents since the day he was born. He had apparently learned that nothing he did got any response, so he passively waited for whatever happened next.

Like the dog, people who have developed in this manner, even if there is a positive response to a later action, have trouble associating that response with their behavior. The ability to learn is disrupted because the person cannot determine if or when he or she has successfully responded to the environment. The person's emotions are also unnaturally heightened; he or she frequently loses track of time and shows unhealthy forms of anxiety; passivity becomes characteristic behavior; and fatigue and isolation may accelerate feelings of helplessness.

SOLUTIONS Having some sense of control over one's environment will counter the effects of learned helplessness. Therefore, anything that contributes to increasing a person's ability and belief that he or she can have an impact on his or her circumstances will be beneficial. Based on the curative methods Seligman and other therapists have employed, useful suggestions for changing the effects of learned helplessness include some of the following:

- Attempt to make the learning environment different from the one in which helplessness was learned.
- Provide early successful learning experiences when trying out new behavior, but make sure they are not too easy: It is important to make the connection between efforts and results.
- Get involved in settings where there is a sense of control over results.

Scientists believe that what gives us self-esteem, makes us feel competent, and protects us against depression is our perception that we can have some control over what happens to us. Anything that supports the notion that effort can lead to achievement helps to fight against the debilitating effects of learned helplessness.

COPING STRATEGIES

Coping is the process of managing difficult situations; working to solve personal problems; and learning to minimize, reduce, or tolerate stress. Distressful situations can be rendered less stressful when we learn to effectively cope with them. There are two general forms of coping, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984): **problem-focused coping** and **emotion-focused coping**.

“Whatever you think you can do or believe you can do, begin it. Action has magic, grace, and power in it.”

Goethe

Problem-focused coping strategies have to do with facing the trouble squarely and trying to fix it by altering the situation, influencing the behavior of others, or changing one's own attitudes, self-talk, and cognitive perceptions of the situation. Problem-focused coping can sometimes mean not putting yourself in the situation that is causing you stress: avoiding difficult people or changing jobs, for example. This is different than avoiding a problem that needs to be dealt with; it means evaluating whether or not you really need to be involved with a problem.

Problem-focused coping can also involve making a plan in advance of an activity. For example, if you take the time to consider what might go wrong before you leave on a trip, you will have all the necessary items in case you break down on the highway. Don't wait until you are in the middle of the desert to think about what equipment you should have brought along.

Sometimes you simply can't change something—losing money through a divorce decree, losing a close friend, or experiencing an environmental disaster. In this case, you need to switch into *emotion-focused coping* which is oriented toward managing the emotional distress caused by a situation. Emotion-focused coping strategies include expressing feelings, seeking support from friends who can help support you or cheer you up, using meditation and relaxation techniques, and being involved in physical exercise. But, there can be negative aspects of emotion-focused coping. Some people can get overwhelmed by their feelings and this leads to unhealthy patterns of avoidance, denial, and rationalization. While trying to feel better, using defense mechanisms may make the situation more difficult.

People are more likely to use problem-focused coping when they feel there is something they can do about the problem. When a problem seems beyond control, they are more inclined to rely on emotion-focused coping. In most distressful situations, it is probably best to use a combination of the two strategies.

For example, if a conflict occurs with someone at work, it might be important to consider problem-solving techniques and plans for compromise, such as finding out what the rules and guidelines are in the area of dispute, along with using emotion-focused coping such as sharing feelings with your spouse or a friend. You might also need to be less defensive and focus on staying relaxed while discussing the problem.

As with any other psychological construct that attempts to explain and describe complex human behavior, coping strategies and theories can get complicated fast. For example, coping strategies can also be categorized as **active-cognitive strategies**, **active-behavioral strategies**, and **avoidance strategies**.

“Rather than being the illness, the symptoms are the beginning of its cure. The fact that they are unwanted makes them all the more a phenomenon of grace, a message to initiate self-examination and repair.”

M. Scott Peck

Active-cognitive strategies are coping responses in which individuals actively think about a situation in an effort to adjust more effectively. It means using logical reasoning about what has happened and what might need to be done to improve the situation. This may incorporate evaluating your self-talk, clarifying what is the *real* problem, and interrupting negative thoughts by yelling “stop” when you are ruminating about a problem.

Active-behavioral strategies are coping responses in which individuals take some type of action to improve their problem. That means seeking help, actively gaining more information, or taking a different course of action entirely when the problem arises in the future.

Both of these strategies are preferred over **avoidance strategies**, which often create new problems or make the original one worse (Santrock, 2006). When trying to avoid a problem, people are often inclined to indulge in destructive habits and behaviors. This pattern only adds to the pile of things that need to be dealt with.

Ineffective Coping

As mentioned previously, often you need to stop doing what doesn't work before you can start developing a more effective style of coping with life. If you find yourself doing any of the following, remember that there are better ways of dealing with problems and getting what you want.

- **Learned helplessness:** Learned helplessness essentially amounts to giving up. It may have been the best choice at one time, but as an adult it no longer is. When adults encounter a problem in life and decide to do nothing, it may seem to provide temporary relief, but it often makes matters worse later.

- **Being aggressive:** Some people believe that if they get angry and act aggressively toward others that it will either get them what they want or help them to feel better. But, research has shown that being aggressive only tends to fuel more anger and aggression rather than solving any problem (Bushman, 2002). And, if you are trying to change someone's behavior in the hopes that they might help you, being angry seldom gets others to want to come to your assistance.

- **Blaming yourself:** When life isn't going as you planned, there may be a tendency to blame yourself. This is, in some ways, the opposite of being aggressive and blaming others, but isn't any more effective in solving the problem. Even when you may have contributed to some degree to the outcome of an event, heaping all the blame on yourself

is counterproductive. It easily leads to further negative self-talk, depression, and more anxiety—which certainly doesn't help you begin to think of constructive means of solving problems in the long run.

- **Over-indulging yourself:** When things are going *wrong* in your life, this is the *wrong* time to indulge in self-destructive behavior. Disappointment and frustration might make it tempting to drink, do drugs, over-eat, or go on a shopping spree, but these behaviors won't help the original problem. This doesn't mean that you can't ever console yourself with a treat, take time out to relax, or provide yourself reward of some sort if it makes you feel better. But, there is a difference between calling a friend for support and spending twelve hours straight on the Internet avoiding real life.

Effective Coping

Constructive coping may be somewhat of a judgment call. What works in one situation might not work in another. And, even using good coping skills doesn't always mean that your problem will be solved. Sometimes coping means just that: learning to live with a situation that you can't change. Here are some of the aspects and key themes of constructive coping (Kleinke, 2007):

- **Confront the problem directly:** Don't stick your head in the sand and hope that it will go away.
- **Realize that it takes effort on your part:** You may have to make plans and take action.
- **Realistically appraise the situation and your resources:** Be aware of exaggerating the situation and indulging in negative thinking.
- **Keep your emotions in check:** While it may be important to express feelings, don't let yourself go off the deep end.
- **Use self-control:** Don't let indulging in bad habits or destructive behavior take over and prevent you from doing what would really be of help.

The following coping skills (Kleinke, 2007) will be useful additions to your coping arsenal. Notice which of these were used by Lloyd in the story that opened this chapter.

USE SUPPORT SYSTEMS Research shows that people with a good social support system are less depressed and anxious and more optimistic than those with a poor social support system. A social support system satisfies our needs for nurturance and attachment, relieves stress, and bolsters our sense of self-worth. It also provides emotional support (someone to confide in), tangible support (help with a job or a loan), and informational support (advice or feedback about a problem).

Having a strong support system has little to do with how many people you know and a lot to do with developing special relationships in which someone knows you and cares about you. Having a good support system is not related to being sociable and having many acquaintances. People who like to spend time alone can have an effective support system

to use when they need it. Building a good support system is a coping skill because it requires personal effort. It is not very effective to wait until others figure out you need their support. You must be willing to take the initiative.

If friends and family are unable to provide the support you need, it is wise to seek help from a health care professional. Health care professionals are in a position to provide support without becoming emotionally drained. Unfortunately, many people don't appreciate the fact that getting support from health care professionals is a positive coping skill and not a sign of weakness.

PROBLEM SOLVING Problem solving involves developing plans for responding to a challenge. It is a practical coping skill, but it is also useful psychologically because it builds confidence. Try the following:

1. **Self-perception:** Develop a self-perception that includes the ability to problem-solve. This means saying to yourself, "I know that I have the ability to remain calm and rely on my problem-solving skills to decide on the best possible course of action."
2. **Define the problem:** Take some time to figure out the critical issues and conflicts. Then make a list of goals.
3. **List options:** Write down every possible plan and allow yourself to be creative. Supportive people can help you brainstorm and prevent you from getting stuck on one track.
4. **Make a decision:** If you have defined the problem and generated many alternatives, you are ready to decide on a course of action. Run through the possible responses. Which are the most feasible? Which are most likely to get you what you want without causing other problems? Remember, in most situations, there is not just one correct course of action.
5. **Try it out:** Implement a course of action. If your first course of action achieves success, that is great. If not, it is time to work through the stages of problem solving again. Have you defined the problem correctly? Did you consider all possible alternatives? You need to open yourself to all options.

SELF-RELAXATION It is possible to learn to relax on demand. The relaxation response can be learned by attending to the following (Benson, 1984):

1. **Environment:** The relaxation response is easiest to learn in a quiet environment. Place yourself in a comfortable posture in a place where there aren't too many distractions. As you improve your relaxation skills, you will find that you can relax in other places as well.
2. **Body:** When you practice relaxation, your body slows down. Start with slowing your breathing. Breathe in deeply and slowly, hold, and exhale. Repeat this process for five minutes. After a few minutes of deep slow breathing, you will begin to feel more relaxed. Next, teach your body to relax by get-

ting in touch with different muscle groups, and then systematically focus your attention on each part of your body and let go of any tension.

3. **Mind:** The relaxation response is enhanced when you distract yourself from daily thoughts and move into a relaxing frame of mind. As you do deep breathing and muscle relaxation, imagine you are in a special place, such as by a cool waterfall, on a warm beach near the ocean, or in a peaceful meadow. Use your mind power to enhance your feelings of peacefulness.

TALK YOURSELF THROUGH IT Many cognitive therapists believe that **cognitive restructuring** (changing thought processes) can get people to think more positively and optimistically. Self-talk is often helpful in cognitive restructuring. Because self-talk often becomes a **self-fulfilling prophecy**, unchecked negative thinking can spell trouble. That's why it is so important to monitor your self-talk and replace negative self-statements with positive ones. *Thought-stopping* is a specific self-control and cognitive restructuring strategy in which the individual says, "Stop!" when an unwanted thought occurs and then replaces it with a substitute thought that is more positive or useful. Make a list of things that would be useful to say to yourself during times of stress and that could help remind you to think positively.

In preparing for a challenge, you might say to yourself: "I can handle this, I've been through tough times before"; "This, too, will pass—it's only temporary"; or "I don't need to upset myself, and it won't help to worry." When actually confronting a challenge or dealing with a stressful situation, you might tell yourself: "I won't let anger and anxiety get the best of me"; "If I act as if I'm in control, I'll feel that way"; or "Relax and concentrate on what you have to do." Remember to be easy on yourself as you learn new skills. Use challenges as opportunities to test your coping skills. Be willing to make mistakes. Don't force yourself to be perfect.

REWARD YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS If you are making progress in dealing with difficult situations, make sure you acknowledge that to yourself. Of course, it is always nice to be acknowledged by others. But positive feedback from others is not always reliable. If you want to accomplish anything with consistency, you may need to reward yourself. The reward may take many forms; you are the one who knows best what that reward should be.

KEEP A SENSE OF HUMOR Perhaps you can think of a time when you were having a problem, yet a year later that same situation seemed funny. What would you need to do

*"Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for
a lifetime."*

Japanese proverb

Thought Question 9.2

What coping strategies have worked for you? What ineffective coping strategies have you engaged in?

to keep that perspective in the present when encountering a difficult situation? Looking at things in a slightly different manner may make it possible to see the humor in the situation. A sense of humor allows us to make more balanced and objective appraisals of a situation. It also has a favorable impact on the people around us. We receive a lot more cooperation and support from others when we are perceived as pleasant instead of as a grouch. Developing a sense of humor also boosts feelings of self-efficacy. A sense of humor encourages a creative rather than passive attitude toward life challenges.

Developing Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy means that our responses to life challenges can have a meaningful effect and that we are confident about our ability to solve problems. People with a strong sense of efficacy face life's difficulties with energy and persistence. They keep trying new alternatives until they succeed or at least survive the situation. The people who cope the best often have the greatest number of skills available to them and believe that they can effectively implement those skills. Self-efficacy is built up by responding to life challenges with action, flexibility, and persistence. Action is essential because we learn best by doing. Flexibility encourages us to try new alternatives and avoid getting stuck. We might not always succeed, but persistence will give us an attitude of survival (Kleinke, 1998). The following suggestions (Bandura, 1977) are useful in developing a more confident approach to life:

1. **Live a life of goals:** Make it a practice to have goals and to give yourself credit when you achieve them.
2. **Set goals with reasonable standards:** They should be challenging enough to provide a feeling of satisfaction, but also realistic enough that you can reach them.

3. **Talk to yourself in a positive manner:** What you say to yourself really is important. It can influence your behavior.
4. **Seek out good role models:** Role models don't have to be people we know personally, but they should be people who inspire a life attitude of competence and mastery.
5. **Remember that success in reaching goals and overcoming life challenges depends on our willingness to expend the required energy and effort.**

A coping attitude provides people with a heightened sense of competence and self-efficacy. And it requires personal energy. A coping attitude is a philosophy that says life will not always be the way we want it to be, but our coping skills will allow us to make the best of the situation.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Notice that this section is entitled **conflict management**, not *conflict avoidance* or *conflict resolution*. Conflict is a part of life; it will show up at work, with your friends, and most certainly in domestic relations with your spouse and children. Conflict is not always negative. It can be useful at times, because it can raise issues that need to be dealt with for things to run smoothly.

The fact that a couple hasn't argued in 10 years doesn't necessarily mean that they have a good relationship. Sometimes, a relationship evolves in a healthy manner only when all the cards are laid on the table. Some businesses have failed because the partners didn't want to upset each other by bringing up details they thought were being overlooked. Government is fraught with examples of groupthink—when people go along with a bad decision because it is politically expedient and they want to cover their rears. Being nice isn't always helpful. (Where are the devil's advocates when you need them?)

Assertiveness (covered in Chapter 1) is an essential part of conflict management skills. Acquiescing doesn't mean that the problem has been taken care of; most likely, it will surface again. For two parties to negotiate, both have to be willing to state their goals and objectives.

Here is an example: John and Mary are having a heated argument about whose turn it is to take out the garbage. Each one escalates the argument and points out flaws in the other's mental capacities and memory. Suddenly, John (it could as easily be Mary) has a blinding flash of insight as he remembers a piece of the puzzle and realizes that he is the one who is wrong. What does he do then? He argues even harder or louder. Or, if need be, he changes direction in the middle of it all and tries to shift the argument to a subject he is right about. Sound familiar? It's called *kitchen sink fighting* because the object is not to resolve anything but to throw in whatever you need so you can be right.

What was really going on in this example? Perhaps the argument was really about needing attention or being appreciated. Perhaps one or the other was feeling resentful about a perceived inequity in the workload of domestic chores. Maybe the argument was really a smoke screen

for issues about money, sex, or dealing with relatives. The point is, it is difficult to resolve a conflict if the real issues aren't on the table. Another complicating factor has to do with what happens when one person realizes that perhaps he or she contributed to the problem more than he or she had previously thought. If John realizes that he made an error of some type but covers that by escalating the argument and creating more confusion, the problem is compounded. Perhaps the first step in learning how to manage conflict is examining the attitudes and behaviors that allow one to practice new skills.

Attitude Adjustment for Negotiating

The following principles are part of specific negotiating skills:

- **Let go of the need to be right:** If you are interested only in proving your point or proving someone else wrong, resolution will be difficult. If your need to be right is greater than your need to resolve the conflict, then additional skills won't mean much! Some people argue for the sake of argument; if you run up against one of these people, you're better off in the long run if you let it go. If you keep arguing and it seems to be going nowhere, perhaps that is what one of you wants.

- **Don't offer resistance:** It really does take two to tango. If someone is trying to start an argument and you don't fight back with the "I'm right" routine, it really is difficult for the other person to keep going. Some people need to let off steam before they can discuss the problem. If their behavior isn't too severe (remember that it is important to have boundaries and not let anyone abuse you), then it might be useful to just listen. In the John and Mary example, what do you think would have happened if John hadn't offered resistance? At the point when he realized that he was wrong, saying so to Mary would likely have immediately lessened the conflict. (That is, assuming that he had any intention of doing so.)

- **Acknowledge the other person's position:** I've often heard people say, "I don't care if you agree with me; I just want to be understood." Many arguments are over miscommunication and misunderstandings. Some fights continue because one person wants to have his or her beliefs validated, to know that the other person doesn't think that he or she is crazy. It is amazing how effective it can be to say something like "I understand how you might feel that way, given your perception of the situation."

- **Offer your point of view:** When stating your own beliefs, desires, and opinions, it is important to impart, by word and behavior, that you are sharing your point of view about the situation. Nothing disrupts an attempt to negotiate like someone speaking as if his or her words are carved in stone. Express what is true for you. State your beliefs, ideas, and suggestions, but make it clear that you are only offering an opinion.

- **Agree to disagree:** If all else fails, you can always agree to disagree. If both parties let go of being

right, offer no resistance, and acknowledge the other's point of view, then they can probably part amicably. Just as being right isn't always right, winning doesn't always mean you've won. This is especially true in relationships with family and friends. There will be people with whom you want to be close and maintain contact even when you have different ideologies and beliefs. Value the friendships you have with people who have different perspectives, because they provide you with a view you might not otherwise know about. And, as parents, you will want to be able to appreciate different perspectives in order to relate to your children.

- **Choose your battles wisely:** If the past 10 times you walked into the lion's den you got chewed up, perhaps it is time to pick a new den. Some arguments aren't worth having, and there is no use arguing with some people. Some topics have no definite solution and may never be resolved. You have to enjoy debate if you want to discuss religion or politics. It may mean something about you if you continually enter conflictual situations knowing that there isn't any real possibility for resolution.

- **Realize that the other person has important reasons:** No one does anything for no reason at all. If someone seems to be overreacting or blowing an event out of proportion, keep in mind that there must be some important reason why. If someone seems to be really upset, you can bet there is something going on, even if he or she can't tell you what it is. Try to find out what is really upsetting someone if he or she seems to be overreacting to the situation.

- **Recognize the different levels of interaction:** Recognize when you are discussing a topic on two different levels. If you borrow someone's stapler and she becomes extremely upset because of some traumatic event in her life that made her acutely aware of her boundaries, talking about staplers won't do much good. What may seem like a trivial thing to one person may have deep implications for another. Sometimes, it is important to notice the depth of the reaction and to assess whether you are arguing about the same thing and/or on the same level.

Negotiating Skills

An excellent source of information on improving negotiating skills is *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1981). The thesis of the book is "Don't bargain over positions." In other words, let go of the idea that there is only one solution to the problem. It is far more beneficial to determine what you want to accomplish than to take a position and defend it as the only answer.

"First keep peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others."

Thomas á Kempis

There are a number of problems with “positional bargaining” because each party is more involved in defending a stance than in looking for options. Fisher and Ury offer an alternative they call *principled negotiation*, which is outlined in the following four points:

1. **Separate the people from the problem:** Human beings have complex emotions and mysterious motives at times. It is better to focus on the problem at hand than on the people involved. Looking at the task to be solved gives all the parties involved the opportunity to work side by side rather than going at it face to face.
2. **Discuss mutual interests rather than positions:** Focus on what the other person really wants and try to figure out the underlying need. Consider how your needs might also be met by assisting the other person in accomplishing his or her goals.
3. **Invent options for mutual gain:** Do some brainstorming and try to generate a variety of possibilities. The process for doing this is to assess the problem in the real world and analyze it in theory. Ask yourself what is wrong, and then sort these symptoms into categories. Generate broad ideas about what might be done and put them into action with specific steps.
4. **Have a set criterion:** Insist that the results be based on some objective standard.

Whatever your assertiveness and conflict management skills are, there will be times when it seems that the other person just is not willing to bring things to a satisfactory conclusion. There will be times when it would be more beneficial to just let go. That means being able to forgive someone you have had problems with, even if he or she wants to continue creating conflict.

STAYING CENTERED Sometimes, the greatest skill you can possess in managing conflict is the ability to not “get got” when someone is trying to get you. Have you ever had to deal with someone you knew wanted to make you mad or wanted to get into an argument that had no possible solution? Even if you didn’t react at first, once you got hooked and started getting upset or got drawn into a pointless argument, you got no credit for having tried to resist. What makes some people good at coping with conflict is their ability to go more than one or two rounds before getting hooked.

UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 13.4 percent of the adult population used mental health services during 2008. This number included people who used both in-patient and outpatient services, as well as

prescription medication for emotional or mental health problems (NIMH, accessed May 7, 2011). During any one year, according to mental health workers, it is estimated that one in four people will have some type of psychological disorder. According to various estimates, between 30 and 45 percent of people will seek help with psychological problems during the course of their lifetime (Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011; Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012). There is some question as to whether women or men have more disorders, but it is more a matter of what type of problem is being addressed and the willingness to seek help. Women, who have a greater tendency to internalize things, tend to have more trouble with phobias and depression. Men, being more inclined to externalize problems, are more likely to seek help due to problems with drugs and alcohol or to have long-term antisocial behaviors related to aggression (Hyde, 2004).

It is difficult to estimate the real incidence of mental health problems because the line between having a psychological disorder or not is difficult to establish—it’s a continuum—and there is no universally agreed upon standard for normal versus abnormal behavior. For example, many people feel anxious when they have to give a speech in public. Often, that is because they think that people might not like them, they may say something stupid, or they will be rejected. That is quite different from being paranoid and believing that everyone is out to get you or wants to do you harm. But, where is the line between high anxiety and paranoia?

Also, it is important to understand that abnormal behavior and psychological disorder do not necessarily mean the same thing. You can have a psychological diagnosis, such as depression, without exhibiting abnormal behavior. That being said, it is important to understand and be able to identify certain disorders, in order to better help yourself and others in times of need. Before getting into specific categories and disorders, there are some general things to look for to determine whether a person has a psychological disorder (Santrock, 2006):

- **Personal distress:** If someone has anxiety attacks that prevent them from functioning, or they report being so depressed that they are considering suicide, they may be classified as having a disorder.

- **Deviance from socially accepted norms:** Deviance from cultural norms may or may not represent atypical behavior that indicates psychological disorder. We need to keep in mind that people who are highly successful in their field are also considered atypical.

- **Maladaptive behavior:** Maladaptive behavior is ineffective or inappropriate actions. Maladaptive behavior creates a problem, especially if it impairs a person’s ability to function in such areas as work, family, or getting along with others in society. Just as with deviance, though, what constitutes maladaptive behavior—and psychological disorders—varies from culture to culture.

As the statistics above indicate, mental health problems are fairly common. Though some disorders may be dramatic and a few are debilitating, most of us have some experience dealing with mental health issues. Most disorders can be treated and many can be cured. The important thing to remember is that it is useful to talk openly about mental health and to seek help when necessary. There is still some stigma attached to getting help for mental health issues, even though in modern times they are often viewed as a variation of medical health issues.

Theoretical Approaches to Psychological Disorders

Historically there has been general misunderstanding about the causes of mental illness; when people acted abnormally, they might be labeled witches or considered possessed by evil spirits. Thankfully, we are a long way from throwing people in dungeons for being possessed. Today, we adhere to a **medical model** as the basis for thinking about psychological disorders. Such behavior is viewed as a type of disease. The term **mental illness** indicates that our society increasingly views people with mental problems as being in need of help. But what causes people to act in an abnormal manner or be considered to have a psychological disorder? The basis for mental illness is still being explored. When trying to discover the causes of psychological disorders, we are once again in the realm of constructs—looking for patterns in behavior and trying to label those patterns in a way that will be enlightening and useful. In the case of causes of psychological disorders, there are three main approaches (Santrock, 2006):

1. The biological approach: The biological approach stresses the physiological aspects of mental illness—an abnormal brain structure, a chemical imbalance in the brain involving neurotransmitters, or an aberration in genetic make-up.

2. The psychological approach: As mentioned in the section of Chapter 3 on personality, the psychological approach holds that mental disorders are the result of internal mental conflicts. *Psychodynamic* explanations attribute problems to disruptions in early relations with parents—it all comes back to mom and dad. The psychodynamic approach also emphasizes the unconscious internal conflicts that can cause anxiety (such as sex and aggression) and possibly lead to maladaptive behavior. The *behavioral* perspective is that abnormal behavior is the result of various forms of rewards and punishments in the environment that influence and shape behavior. People living in an extremely dysfunctional family, for example, may have been rewarded for antisocial behavior. The *social cognitive* perspective suggests that it is a person's beliefs that can create psychological disorders. How someone thinks about his or her ability to be effective in the world, and what his or her expectations are

about life, influences his or her behavior and can create abnormal behavior if these beliefs and expectations are very negative or troubling.

3. The sociocultural approach: The sociocultural approach takes into account a wide range of environmental factors such as the person's family, neighborhood, economic status, and culture. For example, living in impoverished conditions creates its own specific kind of stress that can lead to mental disorders. Invariably, people from low-income, minority neighborhoods tend to have the highest incidence of psychological disorders.

In any given case or situation, most likely all three approaches can contribute to or help explain a person's particular disorder. As we will see in the section that discusses therapies, often people in the mental health field will adopt an approach that takes all these factors into account. Naturally, they even have a word for the interaction of all these influences: **biopsychosocial**.

Classifying Abnormal Behavior

Because *psychological disorders* are constructs, it has taken years to develop a classification system that seems to cover the variety of nonfunctional behavior patterns people exhibit. In 1952 the American Psychiatric Association developed the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*. Over the years, as more is learned about disorders, it gets updated. The fifth edition (*DSM-V*) is scheduled for publication in 2013. The current classification system of the *DSM-IV-TR* is very complex because the range of behavior it describes is complex. Because this is only an introductory course in psychology, we won't explore the DSM categorization scheme in detail. Instead, we'll emphasize the things that people need to know in daily life. However, for those interested, a further description of the classification system is in the text box labeled *DSM Categories*.

Though it is a useful tool for clinicians who need to have some level of agreement in working with people and their problems, it is important to remember that the DSM classification system creates labels. Part of the criticism of the DSM is the potential stigma that comes from labeling people. Remember the section on social classification? Labels can be useful for thinking about complex behavior, but they can also lead to incorrect conclusions about people because each person is unique. Also, labels can become a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. People may get a particular diagnosis and then think that they have to act out all the symptoms, or that they are “stuck” with the diagnosis and will be unable to change. Another criticism of the DSM is that it tends to focus mainly on pathology and on finding something wrong with a person. Focusing on the negative aspects of a person can lead to reduced self-esteem.

The advantages seem to outweigh the disadvantages, though. The classification of psychological disorders

DSM Categories

The current *DSM (DSM-IV-TR)* requires judgments about individuals along five dimensions, called axes. The first two axes are disorders. The other three axes are used to describe supplemental information. The five axes of the DSM are:

- **Axis I—Clinical Syndromes:** This covers all the disorders not on Axis II. The most common disorders on Axis I are anxiety-related disorders such as phobias, mood disorders such as depression, dissociative disorders, substance-related disorders, eating disorders such as anorexia, disorders appearing in childhood such as attention deficit and hyperactive disorder, and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.
- **Axis II—Personality Disorders and Mental Retardation:** This covers disorders that are related to maladaptive personality patterns, such as antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder.
- **Axis III—General Medical Conditions:** This includes things like diabetes and arthritis; these are included because the presence of a general medical condition can be relevant in trying to understand and treat a mental disorder. It may be impossible to understand and help a depressed person, for example, if the mental health provider does not take into account the fact that the person is suffering from a difficult or painful illness.
- **Axis IV—Psychosocial and Environmental Problems:** This covers negative life events like divorce and death, as well as living conditions such as housing or occupational problems.
- **Axis V—Global Assessment of Functioning:** Based on all of the above, the current level of a client's functioning is reported on a scale of 1–100, where 100 is "superior functioning" and 10 is "in danger of hurting oneself or others."

enables mental health professionals to discuss the likelihood that a disorder will appear, who is susceptible to the disorder, how treatment is progressing, and the prognosis for effective treatment. There is also a financial and legal aspect. In order for a treatment to be reimbursed by insurance, a person needs to have a disorder listed in the DSM. Society benefits when mental health issues are addressed by the medical community: The more people who get the help they need, the less cost there will be for hospitals, courts, and businesses.

Though there are numerous major categories of psychological disorders in the DSM, only the most common ones will be addressed here.

- **Anxiety Disorders:** Anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, phobic disorder, panic disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These disorders have been linked to genetic predisposition, temperament, anxiety sensitivity, and neurochemical abnormalities in the brain. Many anxiety responses, especially phobias, may be caused by having the behavior rewarded by others. Cognitive theorists maintain that some people are vulnerable to anxiety disorders because they see threat everywhere. Stress may also contribute to the onset of these disorders.

- **Mood Disorders:** The principal mood disorders are major **depression** and **bipolar disorder**. People vary in their genetic vulnerability to mood disorders, which are accompanied by changes in neurochemical activity in the brain. Cognitive models suggest that a pessimistic view of life with a negative interpretation of unpleasant events, excessive rumination about potential problems, and other types of negative thinking contribute to depression. Depression is often rooted in interpersonal difficulties, as people who lack social skills often have difficulty in relationships. Mood disorders are sometimes stress-related. In the

extreme, people who have extended episodes of depression may become suicidal.

- **Personality Disorders:** These are evident when a person is so inflexible that he or she has impaired ability to cope with normal life situations and this causes disruption in his or her social interactions and jobs. These disorders are often more of a problem for the people around the individual than for the individual himself, so such people are frequently reluctant to seek help. **Narcissistic personality** is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, which, ironically, often is covering up a sense of inferiority. These people believe they are unique and should receive special treatment even when their behavior warrants otherwise. **Antisocial personality**, formerly called sociopathy, is characterized by a long history of maladaptive thoughts and behaviors that violate the rights of others. These people seem to have no conscience and have little guilt about manipulating and using others. **Borderline personality** is characterized mainly by instability. These individuals have unstable relationships, unstable self-image, unstable mood swings, and their impulsiveness leads to unstable behavior. They may injure themselves or engage in reckless behavior in an attempt to gain attention or prevent someone from leaving them.

- **Eating Disorders:** The principal eating disorders are **anorexia nervosa** (an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat) and **bulimia** (episodic binge eating followed by guilt and self-condemnation, associated with measures taken to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, the use of laxatives, dieting, or fasting). Both reflect a morbid fear of gaining weight and an unrealistic body image. Anorexia and bulimia are both associated with other psychological problems and both lead to a variety of medical problems. Eating disorders appear to be

a product of modern, affluent, westernized culture. Certain forms of obesity can also be thought of as eating disorders.

- **Schizophrenic Disorders:** These disorders are characterized by deterioration of adaptive behavior, irrational thought, distorted perception, and disturbed mood. Schizophrenic disorders can be classified as paranoid (delusions of persecution or unwarranted jealousy), catatonic (psychomotor disturbance that may involve stupor, mutism, or bizarre posturing), disorganized (erratic speech, childish mannerisms, and bizarre behavior), or undifferentiated (severely impaired thinking, emotions, and behaviors). There seems to be a definite biological underpinning in schizophrenia. Research has linked it to genetic vulnerability, changes in neurotransmitter activity, and enlarged ventricles in the brain.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER **Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder** (ADD/ADHD) is characterized by symptoms such as impulsiveness, distractibility, and difficulty sustaining attention for periods of time. The acronym ADD is normally used whether or not hyperactivity is present. Symptoms may be different in each person with ADD. Children with ADD are often diagnosed after beginning school. This occurs because school may be the first environment where a child is expected to sit still for extended periods of time and sustain attention and focus. The CDC reports that in 2007 5.5 percent of children between the ages of 4 and 10 were diagnosed with ADD, 8.6 percent between 11 and 14, and 9.5 percent between 14 and 17 (CDC, accessed May 2011b). Boys are diagnosed with ADD more often than girls, although ADD is considered to be as prevalent in girls as it is in boys. One theory to explain this is that the inattentive type of ADD, which is harder to diagnose than ADD with hyperactivity, is more prevalent in girls.

There are a number of physical illnesses that can cause symptoms similar to ADD. These should be ruled out as a cause of symptoms, as well as psychological factors such as the effects of a move or a divorce in the family. Although the biological origins of ADD have not yet been determined, there is a strong suggestion of heredity. A great many children with ADD have a close family member with ADD as well. There are theories that link smoking during pregnancy, low birth weight, brain injury, environmental exposures (such as lead), and premature birth to ADD, but there has been no definitive proof to substantiate these theories. Research has shown that some areas of the brain can be up to 10 percent smaller in individuals with ADD; however, ADD does not affect intelligence. Research does not support the popularly held views that ADHD is caused by eating too much sugar, watching too much television, parenting, or social and environmental factors such as poverty or family chaos. Of course, many things, including these, might make symptoms worse, especially in certain people. But the

evidence is not strong enough to conclude that they are the main causes of ADHD (CDC, accessed May 2011c).

Help for the Newly Diagnosed ADD Adult A diagnosis of ADD/ADHD in adulthood can be confusing. Some people have been compensating in numerous ways, often quite successfully, and are surprised that they may need help. For adults, and especially students, the limiting aspects of ADD are sometimes apparent only when the challenge or task is so difficult that the need to be organized and methodical becomes imperative. Sometimes people are relieved to learn that they are not alone and that there could be a biological reason for their problems; this offers hope. On the other hand, there are often periods of denial, confusion, and not knowing what to do or where to turn. If you are diagnosed with ADD, here are some things you can do (Hallowell, 2011; Hallowell and Ratey, 1992; Helpguide, accessed May 7, 2011):

- **Minimize distractions:** Look around and identify things that might distract you. Find a place to sit away from those who like to chat. Sit close to the instructor in class and away from the windows. Turn off phones and instant messaging. Use a “do not disturb” sign. If great ideas keep popping into your head, jot them down and think about them later.

- **Notice where and how you work best:** Some people work well by minimizing distractions, but some work best in what others might consider “odd” conditions: listening to music, in a noisy room, sitting on the bed, or wrapped in blankets.

- **Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses:** Notice that some things are on both lists; they could be either positive or negative depending on the circumstances. For example, a strength could be **divergent thinking**—the ability to come up with new solutions and think outside the box. But in some contexts this could result in being unorganized and scattered from having one’s mind wander off into new ideas. Another example is the willingness to take risks. This can help you accomplish a lot, but can also create difficulty if the risk is impulsive or dangerous.

- **Do what you’re good at:** Note that you must show that you believe in yourself before you can expect anyone else to believe in you. Play to your strengths. There are numerous jobs for which having high energy and the ability to deal with a number of things at once would be considered valuable skills.

- **Use tricks to improve concentration:** Those with ADD can concentrate intently, almost compulsively, on activities they find interesting. But they have trouble concentrating on activities they might not find interesting. Military history? I can read about that for hours. Math? Forget it. Listening to lectures and taking notes? Doubly forget it. Try the following:

- ✓ Write things down that you need to remember. Keep it all in one place. Don’t count on memory.

- ✓ Write while you listen. Sometimes the act of having to summarize something focuses attention.
- ✓ Force yourself to repeat instructions.
- ✓ Move around. Some people find it easier to concentrate when they are moving.

• **Prioritize and make lists:** You can't organize if you can't prioritize. Those with ADD often struggle with impulse control and have trouble getting tasks done. Large projects seem daunting. Procrastination often comes from feeling that a task is overwhelming. Break large tasks into small ones. Prioritize the small tasks and attach deadlines to them. Resist the urge to "just be finished and done with it."

• **Learn to say no:** Because everything seems interesting, those with ADD frequently agree to do too many things. Do fewer things so that you can concentrate on each. Check your schedule before committing to something new.

• **Learn to delegate:** If you know you aren't good at something, such as keeping appointments or finding information on the Internet, ask someone else to help you in return for you helping them to do something else.

• **Organize:** Those with ADD often have piles of things everywhere and then can't find what they want when they need it. My father's will? I think it may be in this drawer. Notes on the upcoming test? Those may be in the bedroom. Don't set important pieces of paper aside without thinking. Just as soon as the thought "I need to keep track of this" crosses your mind, put it in your "I need to keep track of this" file. To keep things organized, label your file folders.

Remember that ADD is a biological condition caused by a genetic predisposition. Your brain is simply wired differently than others. It's not caused by lack of willpower, moral failing, weakness of character, failure to mature, or how you were raised. As with other topics in this book it's not your fault, but the solution still remains your responsibility.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

Psychotherapy is the process of helping a client make changes in his or her life regarding attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Many people who need therapy don't receive it. All too often, the biggest problem that a person has is that he or she thinks that he or she doesn't have one! Even the majority of those who are aware of needing help don't actually get professional assistance (Weiten, Dunn, and Hammer, 2012), perhaps because it can be confusing to decide which of the wide range of professionals to consult: psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, social workers, or other mental health specialists. Some problems are better addressed by certain types of therapy, but

most psychotherapists consider themselves to be **eclectic** in that they use a combination of approaches and styles based on the needs or problems of the client they are working with. In this section we will discuss some of the major therapeutic approaches, and discuss what to look for in a therapist.

Insight Therapies

Though there are a number of schools of thought regarding the "how to" of insight therapy, what they all have in common is the belief that talking about problems can increase a client's understanding of him- or herself, his or her personality, and the source of his or her problem.

PSYCHOANALYSIS While Freud comes to mind for many people when they think about therapy, the traditional form of this kind of therapy is seldom practiced today. Few people would be able to afford three to five sessions weekly for a period of years. And, clients—previously called patients—are no longer required to lie on a couch. Originally, lying on a couch was a means of dealing with **transference**, which is the tendency of the client to project his or her thoughts and feelings onto the therapist. According to psychoanalysts, transference is the unconscious process that reflects the client's need to create a relationship similar to other significant relationships in the client's life, frequently from childhood. Exploration of those relationships is at the core of psychoanalysis. The original notion was that if the client didn't look at the therapist, but still developed negative or positive feelings about the therapist, then the client's reactions must be coming from his or her own unconscious, unresolved conflicts from the past.

Psychotherapists today talk with clients face-to-face and may deliberately foster a relationship that encourages transference. The intent is to allow the clients to transfer their conflicting feelings about their domineering father, distant mother, or critical sibling to the therapist and therefore bring repressed feelings and conflicts to the surface in order to *work through* the unconscious material and defenses.

Other means of exploring the unconscious are **free association** and **dream analysis**. As a person begins to talk about his or her problem, he or she eventually stops censoring his or her thoughts and brings up material that the therapist can then explore and discuss. The therapist attempts to explain the importance of the material and significance of the client's thoughts and feelings and gradually introduces ideas that lead the client to his or her own revelations about his or her behavior.

PERSON-CENTERED THERAPY This type of therapy places importance on providing a supportive emotional space for people to deal with their problems by determining the pace and direction of their own therapy. Carl Rogers provided an alternative to psychoanalysis through this humanistic approach to therapy. He believed that

the therapist's acceptance and empathic understanding are necessary and sufficient for producing therapeutic change. He also stressed the need for the therapist to be truly genuine.

According to Rogers, most personal problems are due to inconsistency, or **incongruence**, between a person's self-concept and reality. This incongruence is usually rooted in the client's overdependence on the approval and acceptance of others. Unlike the repressed conflicts that Freudian therapists might explore, person-centered therapists focus on helping clients to realize that they don't have to worry so much about pleasing everyone around them.

Therapists using Rogerian methods believe that we all have within us the resources and means to take charge of our lives, understand our behavior, and develop our own purpose and meaning in life. According to Rogers, there are three main conditions that must be present for the proper climate that encourages growth and change. They are:

1. Genuineness: The therapist has to be willing to be real, honest, and open with his or her thoughts and feelings. The therapist can't be phony or defensive, and needs to be able to communicate in an open, honest, and spontaneous manner.

2. Unconditional positive regard: This is the hallmark of Rogerian therapy. The therapist must be able to show acceptance of the client without reservation. This means being nonjudgmental and remaining warm and caring, no matter what the client is talking about. It doesn't mean having to accept all of the client's behavior, but it does mean separating the person from the behavior and continuing to value the person.

3. Empathic understanding: This means being able to have an accurate understanding of the client's point of view, and communicating to the client that the therapist can relate to the client's view of the world.

Behavioral-Cognitive Therapies

Behavioral therapies focus on discovering what triggers the problem behavior, what reinforces the likelihood that it will occur, what the target behaviors are to replace it, and what the factors are that need to be changed in order to have the new behavior occur. Behavioral therapists also help clients to develop the skills that will enable them to use these new choices and cope more effectively with problems in the future. Behavioral therapists use token economies (giving rewards for desirable behavior), modeling (showing someone how to act), social skills training, and desensitization.

Joseph Wolpe (1958) developed **systematic desensitization**, which is a method for controlling anxiety by learning to associate it with an incompatible response like

relaxation. This means the client is trained in relaxation techniques and gradually exposed to an increasing hierarchy of anxiety-producing scenarios. When the client can remain calm and conquer the fear of an imagined situation, he or she is encouraged to confront the situation for real.

At one point, behavioral therapies placed little importance on the internal thoughts and cognitions of the client, but over the years it became increasingly evident that it is not just the circumstances of a situation that produce a response. Cognitive therapists focus on distorted thoughts and reactions, and claim that people's interpretation of an event is more important than the event itself. A central theme of cognitive therapy is that emotional and behavior problems result from faulty cognitive processes. As such, therapists challenge the thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs of the client. But, unlike psychotherapies, cognitive therapists don't probe for the underlying cause of the distorted thoughts; they deal more with just changing the thought patterns.

Biomedical Therapies

Biomedical therapies address the physiology of disorders—usually some chemical imbalance in the brain or body—and are intended to reduce or relieve the symptoms of the disorder. There are three main categories of psychotherapeutic drugs that are used to treat psychological disorders: anxiety drugs, antidepressant drugs, and antipsychotic drugs.

1. Antianxiety drugs: These drugs relieve tension, apprehension, and nervousness. The most common are Valium and Xanax, which are in the family of tranquilizers.

2. Antidepressants: These drugs bring people out of depression and gradually elevate their mood. In the last 10–15 years, these types of drugs have come to be among the most prescribed medications in the United States (Olfson and Marcus, 2009). There is a current trend toward prescribing **selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)**. Although the drugs in this class, such as Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft, have been thought to be effective in treating depression while producing fewer side effects than previous drugs, there is increasing concern about a heightened risk of suicide when using these drugs, primarily among adolescents and young adults (Holden, 2004).

3. Antipsychotic drugs: These drugs are used to reduce psychotic symptoms such as mental confusion, hallucinations, and delusions, and are primarily used to treat schizophrenia. Common drugs in this classification are Thorazine, Mellaril, and Haldol. While these drugs are not without side effects, the majority of people experience reduced psychotic symptoms and begin to respond within one to three weeks. These drugs have been instrumental in de-institutionalizing people; the number of **inpatients** in mental hospitals has decreased significantly since the 1950s.

GUIDELINES FOR GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

Knowing how to get professional help for yourself or others is sometimes a difficult task. Should you ever have an occasion to seek professional help, you might consider the following questions (Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011):

• **When should you seek professional help?** Seek professional help whenever your personal problems begin to interfere with your health, work, relationships, or personal life; when your present methods of coping are no longer effective; when you are engaged in old, self-defeating strategies that you know from experience do not work; or when your family or friends are tired of being used as therapists and become openly concerned about you. Most important, whenever you feel overwhelmed and desperate and you don't know what to do, it's best to seek help. However, you don't have to have a serious problem, much less a psychological disorder, to benefit from therapy. More and more people are seeking therapy as a means of personal growth, to improve their coping skills, and to get more out of life.

• **Where do you find help?** Many therapists work in comprehensive mental health centers that are now available in most communities. Staffed by a combination of psychiatrists (medical doctors with the ability to treat disorders requiring drugs and hospitalization), psychologists (people with clinical training in the methods of assessment and treatment), clinical social workers (people with supervised clinical training as part of their master's degree program in the field of social work), and counselors (people with training in personality theory and counseling skills, usually at a master's level), these centers offer a variety of services, including emergency help.

The same types of therapists can also work in private practice. They are usually listed in the Yellow Pages or on the Internet by their respective professions. If you have insurance such as an HMO, PPO, or other group plan, the company itself usually maintains a list of approved panel providers. Other referral sources include the American Psychological Association, as well as state and local psychological associations.

“Many individuals see counselors not because they are depressed but because they want an informed opinion about their situation. They want to see new possibilities and new ways of looking at old problems. And they want the wisdom of someone who has helped other people in similar circumstances.”

Robert L. Veniga

• **What can you expect from therapy?** Counselors and therapists provide an empathic, caring, and trusting relationship, hope for the demoralized, and a new perspective on yourself and the world. Beyond this, a lot depends on the goals and progress made in your particular therapy. People seeking relatively short-term therapy usually acquire a better understanding of their problems as well as the necessary skill to cope with a personal or family crisis. Those undergoing relatively long-term therapy may work toward more fundamental changes in their personality and may remain in therapy for a year or longer.

• **How long do you need to go?** The recent trend toward short-term therapies and the increased concern for containing health care costs have made the length of therapy a major issue. Consequently, the appropriate length of treatment often becomes an issue to be decided by clients and their therapists. There are two key issues to consider in deciding when to terminate therapy. First, is the crisis or problem that brought you to therapy under control? You need not have resolved all of your difficulties, but you should have more understanding and control over your life so that your difficulties do not interfere with your work and personal activities. Second, can you maintain the gains acquired in therapy on your own? It is best to discuss these two issues with your therapist before deciding to terminate therapy. At the same time, bear in mind that in therapy, as in all close relationships, there will be unsettling as well as gratifying occasions. Therapy can become so uncomfortable that you may want to quit. However, if you invest yourself in it and keep going, you'll eventually find that it is a very rewarding experience.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Physical well-being affects mental health and vice versa.
- Lifestyle is more damaging to health and well-being than disease.
- The most important thing you can do to resolve conflicts in a way that maximizes personal benefit is to give up the notion that you must be right at all costs.
- Everyone has trouble coping sometimes and a significant number of people will develop some level of psychological disorder over the course of their lifetime; it shows strength to seek professional help if you need it.

Chapter Review

HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE

Physical well-being affects mental health and vice versa. What kills us has more to do with lifestyle than with contagious diseases. Lifestyle choices that affect health include smoking, use of alcohol and drugs, the amount of exercise we get, and what we eat. Obesity is becoming a global health problem. Numerous sources report the rapid increase in childhood obesity and diabetes. Nutrition is important for good health, and has implications for relationships and human behavior.

SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIOR

We are our own worst enemy at times. It is important to understand the various components of self-defeating behavior in order to make changes. Limiting beliefs are frequently responsible for undermining our own efforts. Unless we address those limiting beliefs, we may develop a pattern of learned helplessness. If so, it is essential to get involved in different settings with people who have a sense of control over their lives. Addressing self-defeating behavior makes it more possible to usefully apply coping strategies.

COPING STRATEGIES

Two general types of coping are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Coping skills include developing support systems, practicing self-relaxation, talking yourself through it, rewarding accomplishments, and keeping a sense of humor. All of these skills contribute to developing self-efficacy, which can lead to a heightened sense of competence.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Having the proper attitude is a prerequisite to conflict management. Some of the valuable points to consider are the following: let go of the need to be right; don't offer resistance; acknowledge

the other person's position; state your opinion as your point of view; agree to disagree when necessary; choose your battles wisely; realize that all people have important reasons for feeling the way they do; and know that some discussions become difficult because you are arguing on two different levels. There are four concepts useful in constructive negotiations: separate the people from the problem; discuss mutual interests rather than positions; invent options for mutual gain; and have a set criterion for evaluation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Although classifying psychological disorders can be complicated, there are several types that commonly affect college students: anxiety, mood, personality, eating, and schizophrenic disorders. Attention deficit disorder (ADD) is also often a problem. All of these can be treated with medications and/or therapy.

GUIDELINES FOR GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

It is possible that up to one third of the U.S. population will utilize the services of some type of mental health organization during the course of their lifetime. If you feel overwhelmed and desperate, it may be useful to get help. You don't have to have a psychological disorder to benefit from therapy. Most therapies provide a caring and trusting relationship, hope for the future, and a new way of understanding yourself and the world. Most people in therapy acquire a better understanding of their problem and the necessary skills to cope with the situation.

Website Resources

Anxiety Disorders

<http://www.adaa.org>

Association for Conflict Resolution

<http://www.mediate.com>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

Mood Disorders

<http://www.drada.org>

Suicide . . . Read This First

<http://www.metanoia.org/suicide>

Tips for helping adults with ADD

http://helpguide.org/mental/adhd_add_adult_strategies.htm

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?

3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations.

The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. How do you take care of your health? Almost everyone knows what they should do, but how often do you make the right choices about taking care of yourself? What do you need to do more often in order to have a healthier lifestyle? What gets in your way?
2. Regarding self-defeating behavior, in what situations are you most likely to “shoot yourself in the foot”? What limiting beliefs undermine your own efforts at accomplishing what you want in life? What behavior and thought patterns do you need to change? How, specifically, will you start that process?
3. In what areas do you most need greater coping skills? What is it that you need to change to improve your skills?
4. What strategies for coping do you usually employ, and what new strategies did you learn about in this chapter? What can you do to develop a better support system for yourself when you are dealing with difficult times in life? What will you do to improve your sense of confidence about your ability to solve problems?
5. How do you stay centered and not “get got” when someone is trying to get you into an argument?
6. How do you manage conflict, and what did you learn about what you can do in the future?
7. Have you ever been in counseling or therapy? What did you find helpful? What did you learn about how to get help? What would you recommend to a friend who was in need of professional help?

It had nothing to do with turning 50. No, really, nothing at all. I just suddenly knew that what I wanted most in life was a Harley. Each time a motorcycle roared past me in my minivan, which was equipped with the kids, dog, and rooftop carrier, every cell of my being yearned for the feeling of being young, wild, and free.

The universe heard my call and provided the opportunity to satisfy my longings. The department chair was going to India on sabbatical, in search of another form of enlightenment than the two-wheeled variety, and was selling a motorcycle. It wasn't exactly a hog, but the Honda Shadow VT 1100cc was a reasonable facsimile, and the price was right. I knew I had to have it. My wife didn't. At first, she was calm and calculating and proceeded as if there was a negotiation in progress. She listed numerous rational objections. Finally, she laid her cards on the table and went for the emotional argument, with a "What about the children?" move. In the end, she just said "NO!!!"

So I begged, borrowed, and sold everything I could, and then cleaned out *my* bank account. I set off with my co-conspirator, Earl, for the big transaction that was going to put me back in the fast lane of life.

My wife's words scattered like the breeze after I picked up the bike. It was July and nearly 90 degrees—definitely T-shirt weather. Helmet strapped down tight, I headed out through the country. The endorphins were kicking in with the exhilaration of accelerating down the road. I was in the wind . . . and this was near heaven.

The first thought that brought me back to earth came when I looked down at the asphalt and realized I was doing 85 . . . and I was still in third with a gear to go. Instead of feeling young, wild, and free, I felt old, vulnerable, and scared.

The next morning, full-blown buyer's remorse set in. I hated to admit it, but I began to wonder, "What was I thinking?" It was too late to take the thing back: The seller had cashed the check. I had to find a buyer on my own. Fortunately, it took only a few weeks before a kindred soul responded to the ad in the paper and bought my fantasy.

Maybe it was a little crazy. Maybe it was a bit of midlife temporary insanity. I finally came to my senses. But I still got a little wistful when I was driving along in my minivan with a carload of "When are we going to get there?" and a Harley roared by.

The 21st century has brought considerable change, and it would be an understatement to say that life is dramatically different than it was a hundred years ago. Communication, electronics, and technology have changed the landscape of our lives. How and where we live will no longer be determined by what we do for a living, as more people work, go to school, and interact socially online. Still, regardless of technological advances, we seem to struggle with understanding the human condition and how to deal with the changes that come about as we proceed through the stages of life. The changes are inevitable, even though specific events are uncertain. It is relevant to learn about and be aware of what some of the more predictable changes may bring.

This chapter is about life transitions and how to deal with them. When we're young we rarely think about our past, let alone our future. Sometimes this is because we're not sure what to think about. This chapter presents information that will enable you to consider what lies ahead, so that you can be more ready when it happens. I cover adult developmental stages, career considerations, the importance of developing meaningful leisure activities, and how to deal with the normal changes of life: jobs, marriage, old age, and death.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 10

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. Describe the demographic changes in the life cycle that will affect human development in the future.
2. In the section *Human Development*, what are the three questions that researchers have debated about human development?
3. Describe Erikson's eight *Stages of Development*. What does the following statement mean: *how we address and resolve challenges at one stage of life will affect our ability to successfully negotiate and progress through the challenges of future stages?*
4. Describe *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. How does he describe self-actualization?
5. Describe the four "statuses" of Marcia's *Theory of Identity Achievement*. How does he describe *crisis* and *commitment*? Why is it important to understand the construct of identity achievement?
6. In the section *Theories of Career Development*, describe Holland's six career-related personality types. Why is it important to understand this idea?
7. In the section *Work Satisfaction*, describe the four dimensions of job satisfaction.
8. What is the importance of leisure and what are examples of the constructive use of leisure?
9. In the section *Life Passages*, what does *necessary losses* mean? Why is it important to acknowledge losses as well as gains when changes occur in your life?
10. From the section *Life Passages*, describe the significant events and changes of childhood, adulthood, and old age.
11. From the section *Transitional Times*, what are Bridges' three phases when going through changes and what are the three rules that are useful to remember?
12. Describe the four aspects of dealing appropriately with endings, what are suggestions for how best to use time in the neutral zone, and what are two signs that you're ready to move to a new beginning?
13. Describe Kübler-Ross' stages of dealing with death, dying, and loss.
14. What does William Worden say are the four tasks of mourning?
15. What are more and less useful things to say to people when they're grieving?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are also two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material make notes on constructs and on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

THEORIES OF LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

There appears to be a revolution happening in the process and events that make up the life cycle. Puberty arrives earlier and adolescence is prolonged well into the 20s, as more young adults live at home longer. For many, true adulthood doesn't begin until 30. Some people today do not feel fully "grown up" until they are into their 40s. You may have heard the saying "50 is the new 30." Now it seems that 60 is the new 40. Middle age has been pushed far into the 50s and even then seems to be only reluctantly acknowledged, as women and men spend enormous sums on *anti-aging* products. In the 19th century, only 1 in 10 people reached the age of 65; in contemporary America, 8 in 10 reach 65. Because of this increased longevity, the 50s, 60s, and beyond now includes stages of life that are nothing like what our grandparents experienced. Everything seems to have shifted by at least a decade.

Unlike members of the previous generation, most of whom had finished raising their children by middle age, many late-baby couples or stepfamily parents will still be battling with rebellious children while they themselves wrestle with the passage into old age. This radical, voluntary alteration in the life cycle may be the most revolutionary change of all (Sheehy, 1995).

Because of all these changes in the average American life span, it helps to further explore developmental theory,

both past and present. Gail Sheehy helped popularize the interest in adult development in her book *New Passages* (1995). Though her work is from almost twenty years ago, it still resonates today. She states that we have a greater need than ever before to recognize the passages of our lives, not only because we are living longer but because the rapidity and complexity of changes taking place are reshaping the adult life cycle into something vastly different from what we knew before.

Human Development

For years, researchers have debated three main questions about human development. The first question is whether life develops in an orderly stable progression—**continuity**—or in a series of stages with abrupt changes—**discontinuity**. The continuous development perspective holds that human beings follow a linear course in life: change is gradual and each new development is built on all the developments that came before. There are ways in which this seems accurate; for example, children's vocabulary size increases in a continuous (though rapid) fashion (Goldfield and Reznick, 1990). But that isn't always what happens. It seems that some of the most important phenomena in human development are nonlinear in nature: discontinuous. Human development may occur rapidly or slowly, it may plateau or even appear to reverse, all at the same time, depending on

which personal characteristic you consider. Some behaviors appear to be acquired in an orderly progression; others may appear in an abrupt shift (Boyd and Bee, 2009).

The second question is whether human development is **passive** or **active**. Does a person have an active role in shaping his or her own development, or is he or she a passive recipient of various biological and environmental influences (Boyd and Bee, 2009)?

The final question is how do **nature** and **nurture** interact to produce development? All theories acknowledge that both nature (biology, genetics, and inherited characteristics) and nurture (parents, society, culture, and environment) are involved, but there are different assumptions about the importance of each. Indeed, recent formulations often abandon the question of which contributes more, and focus instead on the ways in which nature and nurture interact, seeing them as interwoven so complexly that their influences are not really separable (McClearn, 2004). Such an **eclectic** approach is shown, for example, when trying to explain a child's disruptive behavior in school. The family history of ADHD, family dynamics and parental interactions, whether or not the behavior is rewarded by other children's responses, or cognitive factors that impede learning would all be considered (Boyd and Bee, 2009).

Erikson's Stages of Development

Regardless of the answers to the three questions above, there are common themes and issues that all of us must contend with as we grow from childhood through old age. At one time, most developmental studies were concerned only with childhood and adolescence, and they stopped at adulthood. There was the assumption that not much changed during the adult years. However, that notion was—and continues to be—increasingly challenged by middle-aged adults who have many questions about how to contend with all of the societal and cultural changes that have come about in the late 20th century.

Adulthood continues to proceed by stages of development throughout the life cycle. Unlike childhood stages, the stages of adult life are characterized not by physical growth but by steps in psychological and social growth. Marriage, childbirth, first job, and empty nest are what we call marker events, the concrete happenings of our lives. A developmental stage, however, is not defined by marker events; it is defined by an underlying impulse toward change that signals us from the realm of mind or spirit. This inner realm is where we register the meaning of our participation in the external world: How do we feel about our job, family roles, social roles? In what ways are our values, goals, and aspirations being invigorated or violated by our present life structure? How many parts of our personality can we live out, and what parts are we leaving out?

(Sheehy, 1995, p. 12)

It was **Erik Erikson** who revolutionized our view of human growth and development, introducing the theory that each stage of life, from infancy through advanced age, is associated with a specific psychological **crisis** that shapes a major aspect of our personalities. A brief word about the term *crisis* is appropriate here. Although it is commonly used, it is important to note that it has a different meaning from the everyday use; it does not necessarily refer to sudden or traumatic events. Erikson uses the term to indicate that there is a necessary struggle with the turning points that usher in a new stage. *Crisis* is used to indicate the crucial period of decision and an involvement with the issues that need to be resolved within each stage.

Erikson described human development over the entire life span in terms of eight stages, each marked by a particular crisis to be resolved. At these turning points we can achieve successful resolution of our conflicts and move ahead, or we can fail to resolve the conflicts and regress. To a certain extent, our life is the result of the choices we make at each stage; earlier stages of development influence choices that we make later in life. As we progress from one stage to another, we will, at times, meet with roadblocks and detours. These barriers are often the result of having failed to master basic psychological competencies at an earlier period (Boyd and Bee, 2009).

The following are Erikson's eight developmental stages (Erikson, 1963):

1. **Trust versus mistrust:** During infancy (the first year of life), it is important to develop a sense of trust. This requires physical comfort and a minimal amount of fear about the future. Infants' basic needs are met by responsive, sensitive caregivers.
2. **Autonomy versus self-doubt:** After gaining trust in caregivers, infants start to discover that they have a will of their own (early childhood, ages 1–3). They assert their independence. If infants are restrained too much or punished too harshly, they are likely to develop a sense of shame and doubt.
3. **Initiative versus guilt:** As preschool children (ages 3–6) enter a widening social world, they are challenged more and need to develop more purposeful behavior to cope with these challenges. Children are now asked to assume more responsibility. Uncomfortable guilt feelings may arise, though, if the children are made to feel too anxious.
4. **Industry versus inferiority:** As children move into the elementary school years, they direct their energy toward mastering knowledge and intellectual skills. The danger during this stage (middle childhood, ages 6–12) involves feeling incompetent and unproductive.
5. **Identity versus role confusion:** Individuals (adolescence, ages 10–20) are faced with finding out who they are, where they are going, and how they fit in. An important dimension now is the exploration of various alternative solutions when choosing roles. Career exploration is also important.

- 6. Intimacy versus isolation:** Individuals (early adulthood, 20s–30s) face the developmental task of forming intimate relationships with others. Erikson described intimacy as finding oneself, yet losing oneself, in another person.
- 7. Generativity versus stagnation:** A chief concern of people in this stage (middle adulthood, 40s–50s) is to help the younger generation develop and lead useful lives. It is also a time of considering the gap between one’s dreams and what one has achieved and what one still wants to accomplish.
- 8. Integrity versus despair:** Individuals at this stage (late adulthood, 60s onward) look back and evaluate what they have done with their lives. Key tasks are to adjust to retirement, losses, and the death of others.

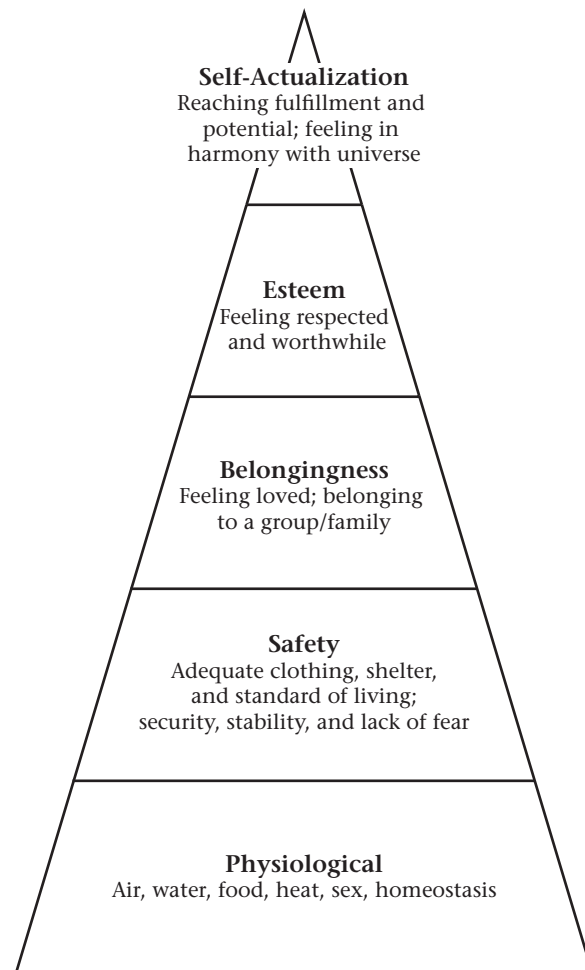
In examining these stages, you can probably come up with ways in which troubles at earlier stages can impair the ability to tackle the next stage. For example, a child who has not achieved a sense of industry, who feels inferior to others and doubts his or her abilities, will probably have trouble, in the next stage, forming a positive identity and set of goals in life. Luckily, Erikson believed that individuals can return to previous stages to better resolve the issues or crises in those stages. You also may notice that not everyone might progress through these stages in exactly the same way or at exactly the same ages.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Whereas Erikson emphasized the mastery of certain tasks in development, others, such as **Abraham Maslow**, stressed the satisfaction of needs.

Maslow was one of the most powerful forces behind the humanistic movement in psychology. He called the humanistic approach the *third force* in psychology because it was an important alternative to both the psychoanalytic and behavioral approaches. From Maslow’s point of view, the psychoanalytic theories placed too little emphasis on the development of normal and well-adjusted individuals, and the behavioral theorists often ignored the development of the individual altogether. Humanists do not believe that behavior is governed either by unconscious drives and motives or by external stimuli and rewards in the environment. They argue that people have a free will and are born with an inner motivation to fulfill their potential. Maslow (1971) called the inner motivation to fulfill one’s potential **self-actualization**. The humanists view self-actualization as a lifelong process rather than as a goal that a person eventually reaches.

Maslow proposed that people can fulfill their higher growth needs only when they have satisfied their basic physiological needs (food, water, air, sleep, sex, etc.) and the need for safety and security. When these needs are met, he or she is free to fulfill the needs for love, belonging, self-esteem, and approval from others. Maslow placed self-actualization at the top of the **hierarchy of needs** and thus the pursuit of self-actualization can easily be interfered with by complications at lower levels.



Maslow's Need Hierarchy for Individuals

Here is how Maslow’s hierarchy might explain motives and behaviors: Imagine that you arrived in a strange town, hungry and broke. According to Maslow, you would be motivated, first of all, to ensure a supply of food and water to satisfy your physiological needs. Then perhaps you would look for a job to obtain money for shelter and security. Only after you had a secure base of operation would you begin to make connections in the community to develop a sense of belonging. Once you feel that you belong and that you shared love with other people, your sense of self-esteem could develop as your loved ones and friends hold you in high regard. At that point, as a fulfilled member of a community, you might begin to develop your full potential (Dworetzky, 1995).

“The gods have two ways of dealing harshly with us—the first is to deny us our dreams, and the second is to grant them.”

Oscar Wilde

Marcia's Theory of Identity Achievement

Most of the work done on the formation of **adolescent identity** has been based on **James Marcia's** description of identity statuses (Marcia, 1966). His research expanded on Erikson's work by dividing the identity stage of development (Stage 5, ages 10–20) into two parts: **crisis** and **commitment**. By crisis, Marcia means that old values and choices are reexamined. The end result of the reevaluation is a commitment to some new identity: role, goal, or value.

These are not stages, but rather processes that adolescents go through to find their identity. All adolescents will occupy one or more of the following four statuses, at least temporarily. But, because these are not stages, people do not progress from one to the next in a fixed sequence, nor must everyone go through each and every status. The following four statuses are determined by the interaction of the crisis and commitment factors: (1) Is the individual involved in searching for his or her true identity or not (crisis), and (2) is the individual committed to an identity or not (commitment)?

- **Diffusion (no crisis, no commitment):** This is the state of having no clear idea of one's identity and making no attempt to find that identity. These adolescents have not really thought much about their identity, have never resolved it, and have stopped trying or never started in the first place. There is no commitment and no searching.
- **Identity foreclosure (no crisis, commitment made):** An adolescent in this status blindly accepts the identity and values that are given to him or her by family and significant others. The adolescent's identity is foreclosed until he or she initiates a search for his or her true identity. The adolescent in this state is committed to an identity but not as a result of his or her own searching or crisis. This status can be adaptive, particularly in cultures or subcultures in which social identity is more fixed and defined by family roles.
- **Identity moratorium (crisis, no commitment):** The adolescent in this stage is engaged in an active "crisis" or search for identity. He or she has acquired vague or ill-formed ideological and occupational commitments, and is beginning to commit to an identity but is still developing it.
- **Identity achievement (crisis and commitment):** In this state, the adolescent has developed well-defined personal values and self-concepts, having gone through a crisis and come out the other side with firm identity commitments (such as choosing a career path or a religious belief). The adolescent's identity may be expanded and further defined in adulthood, but the basics are there.

The whole process of establishing a solid sense of identity may occur later and take longer than either Erikson or Marcia once thought. Studies have shown that cognitive development in adolescents may continue well into

		High	Low
Degree of commitment to a particular role of values	High	Identity achievement status (crisis is past)	Foreclosure status
	Low	Moratorium status (in midst of crisis)	Identity diffusion status
		Degree of crisis	

Marcia's Identity Statuses

the 20s (Boyd and Bee, 2009). And, the adolescents who are most likely to have attained the category of *identity achieved* are the ones with the most advanced development in logical thinking and information processing skills.

Further, other researchers believe that teens who have attained *identity achievement* may sometimes regress to other statuses. For example, in the face of traumatic loss or extreme stress, it may be advantageous for the teen to adopt a status of foreclosure. Allowing others to direct or influence his or her goals may temporarily protect the teen against feeling overwhelmed by the negative emotions that accompany excessively difficult situations (Madan-Swain and others, 2000).

Personal identity development continues throughout the life span; there may be repeated periods of stability and instability. For example, a person's sense of being *young* or *old* in relation to a particular group may change a number of times between adolescence and adulthood. Adolescence may be just one phase of identity formation among several (Boyd and Bee, 2009).

Adjustment in Old Age

Having entered the new millennium, we are bombarded by contradictory information about what it means to grow old. With increased medical knowledge and greater health, will longevity be a blessing or a curse? In the book *Aging Well* (2002), George Vaillant describes what he has learned about successful adjustment in old age based on the Harvard Study of Adult Development. What is unique about the Study of Adult Development is that it consists of grandparents and great-grandparents who have been followed since adolescence. Vaillant concluded that not only are those who have reached old age less depressed than the general public, but the majority of the elderly suffer fewer incapacitating illnesses than previously believed. Other significant findings to emerge from the Study of Adult Development are the following:

- It is not the bad things that happen to us that doom us in old age; rather, it is the lack of connections with other people.

*“When you can’t change the wind,
adjust your sails.”*

H. Jackson Browne

- Healing relationships are facilitated by a capacity for gratitude, for forgiveness, and for letting people into your life.
- A good marriage at 50 predicts positive aging at 80.
- Alcohol abuse predicts unsuccessful aging, in part because alcoholism damages future social supports.
- Learning to play and create after retirement, and learning to gain younger friends as we lose older ones, both add more to life’s enjoyment than the level of retirement income.
- Objective good physical health is less important to successful aging than subjective good health—it’s all right to be ill as long as you don’t feel sick.

All of the various cohort groups in the study repeatedly demonstrated that it was social aptitude—emotional intelligence—that leads to adjustment in old age. Consistent with Reinhold Niebuhr’s famous Serenity Prayer, adjustment in old age depends on the courage to change the things that you can, the serenity to accept the things you cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Work is more than just the activities that take up the majority of your hours each week in order to earn a livelihood. It is a way we give to others as we take care of ourselves. It can be a statement of who we are, to ourselves and others. If you feel good about the career you are in, it will improve the quality of your life. If you don’t like your job and dread the hours spent there, it is bound to have an effect on how you feel about yourself. A well-known psychologist, **Erich Fromm**, studied the relationship between working conditions and the rest of a person’s life during the 1950s. He and a number of other psychologists found that not only are the frustrations of a repressive workplace often brought home and dumped on the family, but so too is any authoritarian structure in a work environment. For example, a man who is an obedient pawn at work may turn into a dictator at home (Daniels and Horowitz, 1998).

Stressful working conditions affect not only people’s mental health, but their physical health as well. People who are dissatisfied with their jobs experience more illness, visit the doctor more frequently, take more time off from work, and don’t live as long as people who are satisfied with their jobs (Atwater and Duffy, 1999).

Historically, workers have been motivated by two main concerns. One is economic necessity: the need to generate income to provide food, shelter, and clothing. The other is the so-called work ethic: the belief that a nonproductive lifestyle is unacceptable. Today’s workers, however, often

grew up in relative affluence, and many seem to take financial security for granted. Although earning money is a necessity, it is no longer enough to guarantee job satisfaction. Many people today have high expectations for their jobs; they want opportunities to learn, use their talents, contribute something worthwhile, and have personal fulfillment.

A major shift in our belief about what motivates people in the workplace has occurred in the last 50 years. Early on, McGregor (1960) described two basic theories of work motivation. Theory X assumes that people inherently dislike work and that they have little ambition. According to Theory X, workers need and prefer to be coerced, directed, and threatened to be productive. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that people find work as natural and satisfying as play or rest. According to Theory Y, workers can and will exercise self-direction and self-control when they are committed to attaining organizational goals. This is especially true if they can simultaneously fulfill their personal needs for autonomy, achievement, and recognition.

A number of disciplines that study the work environment now agree that once physical needs are met, what motivates people are the uniquely human needs for self-actualization, *pleasure*—enjoyment and a sense of gratification—and contributing to the welfare of others, including family, our community, and our nation.

From the above information, it should be obvious that one’s selection of a life’s work has significant implications for one’s overall life satisfaction. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore and understand the process of deciding on an occupation and selecting a career.

“A person’s work is undoubtedly one of the most decisive formative influences on character and personality. Business is not here simply to produce goods, it also produces people, so that the whole thing becomes a learning process.”

E. F. Shumacher

Theories of Career Development

Three major theories will be presented here that describe the manner in which individuals make choices about careers: Ginzberg’s developmental theory, Super’s self-concept theory, and Holland’s personality type theory. Each of these theories has something to offer in understanding how and why we may choose a certain career path.

GINZBERG’S DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY Ginzberg’s developmental theory of career choice subscribes to the view that people go through distinct stages while exploring and deciding on a career path: the *fantasy stage*, the *tentative stage*, and the *realistic stage*. Many children, when asked what they want to be when they grow up, have an unrealistic view of the world. They may answer “the president,” “a movie star,” “a superhero,” or “a doctor,”

without much understanding of what those choices might actually entail. During adolescence, individuals go through different phases of the *tentative stage*. They often progress from evaluating their interests to evaluating their capacities to evaluating their values while thinking about careers. In their late teens and early 20s, most people enter the *realistic stage* and begin to explore available careers and finally select a specific job (Santrock, 2006).

SUPER'S SELF-CONCEPT THEORY Donald Super's view is that an individual's self-concept plays a central role in career choice. He believes that a number of changes occur during adolescence and young adulthood regarding vocation. First, between ages 14 and 18, adolescents develop ideas about work that correspond to their already existing global self-concept. This is called the *crystallization phase*. Between 18 and 22, during the *specification phase*, they narrow their career choices and initiate behavior that enables them to enter some type of career. Between 21 and 24, young adults complete their education and enter the work world; this is called the *implementation phase*. The choice of a specific career is often made between ages 25 and 35, during the *stabilization phase*. Finally, after reaching age 35, individuals seek to advance their careers and reach higher-status positions; this is called the *consolidation phase*. Keep in mind that these age ranges should be thought of as approximations (Boyd and Bee, 2009).

HOLLAND'S PERSONALITY TYPE THEORY John Holland believes it is important for one's personality type to fit one's occupation. When individuals find careers that fit their personalities, they are more likely to enjoy their work and stay in their jobs longer than their counterparts who work at jobs not suited to their personalities. He has proposed six basic career-related personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (Boyd and Bee, 2009):

- **Realistic:** People who have this type of vocational interest like the outdoors and working in manual activities. They tend to be less social, may have difficulty in demanding situations, and prefer to work alone or with other realistic persons. This type shows a match with blue-collar occupations such as labor, farming, truck driving, and construction.
- **Investigative:** This type is interested in ideas more than in people, is rather indifferent to social relationships, is troubled by emotional situations, and may be perceived by others as somewhat aloof. Most of the scientific, intellectually oriented professions fall into this category.
- **Artistic:** Artistic types have a creative orientation and enjoy working with ideas and materials to express themselves in new ways. They often have a distaste for conformity and value freedom and ambiguity. Relatively few artistic occupations exist; some artistic types choose careers in their second or third most typical career type and express their artistic tendencies in hobbies and leisure.

- **Social:** Social types tend to have a helping orientation. They enjoy nurturing and developing others, often the less advantaged. Showing a much stronger interest in people than in intellectual pursuits and often having excellent interpersonal skills, they like "people" professions such as teaching, social work, and counseling.
- **Enterprising:** The skills of this type include being able to persuade other people to do something or to adopt their own attitudes and choices. Therefore, enterprising types are good at coordinating the work of others to accomplish a task. They match up best with such careers as sales, management, and politics.
- **Conventional:** This type usually functions best in well-structured circumstances and jobs in which working with details is important: numbers and clerical tasks, as opposed to working with ideas or people. They are best suited for structured jobs such as bank tellers, secretaries, librarians, and file clerks.

Holland agrees that people are seldom pure types, but the basic idea of matching the abilities and attitudes of individuals to particular careers is an important contribution to the career development field.

Work Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is personal and multidimensional. It's personal because not everyone reacts to a job the same way. It's multidimensional because a person might be satisfied with one aspect of his or her job, such as promotional opportunities, and dissatisfied with another, such as job security. There appear to be four main categories of factors that contribute to whether individuals are satisfied with their jobs:

- **Organizational:** Organizational factors include pay, opportunities for promotion, the nature of the work, policies and procedures of the organization, and working conditions.
- **Group:** Group factors include the nature of interaction with co-workers and supervisors.
- **Personal:** Personal needs and aspirations reflect how a job fits one's view of what it means to be successful, such as job status.
- **Ability to achieve other ends:** A person attending college might take a job because it allows flexibility in scheduling. After leaving college, the person may want something more definite.

As a general rule, college-educated people have more job satisfaction than people with less education. But job satisfaction increases for all people as they grow older. The most common pattern is a steady increase in job satisfaction from the age of 20 to at least 60 for both men and women. Satisfaction probably increases because as we get older we get paid more, are in higher-status positions, have more realistic expectations, and have more job security (Halonon and Santrock, 1997; Duffy, Kirsch, and Atwater, 2011).

If you find your job meaningless you can:

- **Notice which activities are draining and which are energizing:** Make a list and keep track over time. Focus on the factors that you can change rather than the ones you can't.
- **Redefine your goals for the job you have:** You might be able to find ways of advancing within your present job, of creating a more flexible job description or schedule, or of acquiring skills that could prepare you to move on.
- **Change careers:** The option of changing jobs as a way to create more meaning in life always exists, especially because current indicators are that, in the future, people will have two or three careers in their lifetime. You can think of each job as a step to another one (Corey and Schneider-Corey, 2006).

Leisure

While it is important to feel productive and have a meaningful career that enables you to contribute to the world, and while having an intimate relationship with another person is important, there is another area of life that deserves equal attention. That is leisure time and the ability to play. Yet, most Americans feel that they are working more and playing less. One factor influencing this trend is the growing practice of business and other organizations to employ fewer workers and assign them additional responsibilities. This may increase productivity, but the average worker feels overworked. Many people are becoming so absorbed with work that they aren't giving the loving care needed to make marriage work, providing growing children with enough attention, or taking part in community endeavors

(Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011). This is made worse by the fact that often both members of a couple need or want to work, resulting in many things that need to be done during one's "free time": working around the home, doing the dishes, mowing the lawn, or running errands. Time has become a premium in our society, making leisure time an even more precious commodity.

What is this precious commodity? Leisure refers to the pleasant times outside work when individuals are free to pursue activities and interests of their own choosing. Although the balance between work and play depends on the needs of the individual, it is important to have activities that refresh and renew you.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF LEISURE Even a job that is rewarding may take a great deal of energy. During leisure time, we can have more control over our activities. Many psychologists emphasize the importance of play and the ability to let go and be spontaneous. Leisure time is the time to rejuvenate the spirit and go with the flow rather than having to make something happen on a certain schedule. Leisure time can also provide that necessary balance for creating the energy required at work.

Although the balance between work and leisure will be different for each individual, some people schedule leisure activities in such a manner that they miss the point of recreation. Perhaps you have been around someone who was trying so hard to hurry up and have fun that you both became exhausted. This doesn't mean that a leisure time activity can't be strenuous; many people who engage in action sports or hobbies feel more energized. The difference is that they return from the activity refreshed and with more energy, not angry and more anxious.

Case Studies and Student Stories

Kelley grew up in a home with an extremely critical and demanding father. His dad was always calling him either stupid or lazy. His only way of handling the cruel words was to show his dad how hard he could work. By the time he was 21 he had earned his father's respect, but his work ethic had escalated into a compulsion.

When Kelley entered the work world he continued to be driven by a need to demonstrate his competence. He excelled at his job with a plumbing contractor and soon became a lead man. He would put more hours in than anyone in the company. His superiors greatly appreciated him, and he was promoted repeatedly.

After Kelley got married, he found that he expected his wife to have the same work ethic as he did. Together they rebuilt their house and yard, and even built a barn. Kelley kept thinking that the more he did, the more respect he would gain from his wife and his peers, if not his father.

Even his recreational activities tended to be overly competitive. He often felt as keyed up after a game as before—even after a round of golf. Family vacations and activities were just further opportunities to become anxious with planning, organizing, and trying to have everything go just right.

His long hours and intensity took a toll on him, and one day he collapsed in the middle of a commercial plumbing job. When he went to the doctor he was diagnosed as being in a state of total exhaustion. His approach to both work and leisure time activities had caused him to completely use up his physical and mental reserves.

The doctor told Kelley he had two choices: either get into counseling . . . or get into counseling. His doctor found him a group that was designed to help people who had a difficult time relaxing and doing activities just for the sake of enjoyment. It was there that he realized that he was *addicted* to work and could not relax unless he was busy doing something. The empathy that he found from the group not only helped him to make a plan to change but also gave him the means and the motivation to do so.

Today Kelley is a different man. Through exploration of his compulsion to be active and *producing* something constantly, he began to realize the price he paid. Slowly, he began to channel that intensity and drive into a determined will to change. He began to realize the importance of leisure time for himself and his family.

Source: D. Juanita Woods

Thoughts to Live By

If I had my life to live over, I would try to make more mistakes. I'd relax. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I might have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

If I had my life to live over, I would pay less attention to people who teach tension. In a world of specialization we naturally have a superabundance of individuals who cry at us to be serious about their individual specialty. They tell us we must learn Latin or History; otherwise we will be disgraced and ruined and flunked and failed. After a dozen or so of these protagonists have worked on a young mind, they are apt to leave it in hard knots for life. I wish they had sold me Latin and History as a lark.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely, hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments,

and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments—one after another—instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those people who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it all over again, I would travel lighter.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances and circuses. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I'd play hooky more. I would shoot more paper wads at my teachers and have more dogs. I would be carefree as long as I could. I would pick more daisies.

(Adapted from Don Herold; Reader's Digest, October 1953)

On the other end of the continuum, it may not be a positive use of leisure time to just sit in front of the television or the computer. In 2009, adults aged 15 and over spent an average of 2.8 hours per day watching TV (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Although TV may be a source of entertainment some of the time, it is mostly mindless. The ease of pushing a button to be entertained is a temptation, but many

who have curtailed their viewing habits have been amazed at how many other interesting things there are to do in life.

Ideally, constructive leisure activities provide a break in our usual routine, while being interesting and absorbing enough to create energy and excitement. Just passing time and being away from work is not always refreshing. The most valuable leisure activities are those that you look forward to doing and that give you a sense of accomplishment and renewal afterward.

Constructive leisure is also an important step in preparing for retirement. It can be valuable to develop a skill that you can continue doing after you have stopped working. This may be why people take up playing a musical instrument, or learn to paint or do other forms of art, or even take up a sport such as golf. People who have a rewarding leisure activity also have the added benefit that comes with the social connections created by the activity.

LIFE PASSAGES

As we've seen, all of us will experience numerous changes throughout the course of our lives. In this section we cover three broadly defined times in life—childhood, adulthood, and old age—and the changes we'll need to address in each.

In her now classic book *Necessary Losses* (1986), Judith Viorst writes that for every transition we experience or every choice we make to do something new, we also lose something. We must leave things behind when we move on. For example, the child who can hardly wait to start school has to confront the reality of leaving the security of home. Or, the adult who is beginning a new relationship might have to face the end of interactions with friends and relatives from a previous relationship.

The same holds true for the transition from being single to getting married, leaving school for the world of work, being childless to having children, and being employed to finally retiring. There truly are **necessary losses** for many of life's changes. When a door opens to a new phase in life, some things must be left behind. To gain the benefits that



“Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.”

Mark Twain

come with a new phase in life, it is often necessary to make sacrifices in other areas. This holds true even when the change is one that is highly desired and a conscious choice.

The idea of necessary losses is especially important because few decisions in life are made on the basis of being 100 percent sure about the right course of action. More often, we have to make decisions with limited information based on a 60/40 split. When the part of us that does want to do something new reaches a majority, we usually go ahead and make the change. The part that didn't want the change, however, may demand acknowledgment and compensation. That is the nagging little voice that expresses reservations after the fact and chides you for the losses associated with the particular course of action you chose. Therefore, it will help to facilitate the process of change if you acknowledge and grieve the losses. Those who have truly considered what they are giving up are usually better able to incorporate the positive elements of moving on to the next stage.

Let's explore some life changes and the endings and losses necessary for each. We will also see how changes during each stage affect subsequent life transitions. For example, what happens during childhood affects passages in adulthood and how we cope with change in general, and how we navigate through the changes of adult life affects how we confront old age and make peace with dying.

Significant Childhood Events

Many events that occur during childhood can affect a person long into adulthood. Children do not have the same coping skills that adults do for dealing with difficulties, yet they are subjected to similar events. Some of those events, such as divorce, abuse, death of family members, and frequent moves, may influence how a child learns to deal with changes in general during his or her lifetime. To a certain degree, some trauma may actually have an inoculating effect in preparing a person to deal with later hardships, especially if as a child the person was helped to understand his or her feelings and cope effectively with the trauma. Many people, though, become over-sensitized to any kind of transition or change in life that seems to be out of their control.

THE END OF CHILDHOOD A major developmental demarcation for many people was when they decided that it was time to grow up. How and when that demarcation occurred has significance for other decisions in life. The child who was forced at 8 to take over the role of man of the house due to death or divorce will handle subsequent

changes differently from a child who was allowed to have a more average childhood.

When did childhood end for you? Some people remember a specific event or time. For example, I can remember almost the exact moment when I realized my childhood had ended. I was in the sixth grade. I had skipped a grade, so I was younger than most of the others, and I had just turned 11. I still wanted to play cowboys and Indians at that age, and I wanted a gun and holster set with all the extras for my birthday. My parents were really nice and gave me a whole cowboy outfit: hat and boots, the whole works. I remember thinking, “Gosh, this is great. Wow! I am going to look cool out in the street playing cowboys and Indians.” I had my boots and hat on, and I went and stood in front of the mirror, doing a little quick-draw-and-shoot-yourself routine. As I was putting on the belt for the holster, I realized it was at the last notch and that I could barely get it buckled. I looked down at that belt and a voice in my head said, “Oh, no, I'm too big!” Suddenly, it was as if my whole world changed. Part of me said, “You're too old for this stuff. You're not a kid anymore.”

I think I even went outside wearing the outfit and looked up and down the street to see if I could still play kid games. As I stood there, though, I realized I was too old for that. Suddenly, I didn't want anybody to see me. I became embarrassed and went back in the house and took off all the stuff. I put it back in the box and put the box underneath my bed, and that was it. At that moment, I knew my childhood had ended.

Some people may relate more to a particular year as a transitional period, rather than to a particular event. Although I remember the cowboy outfit incident, I also knew I had to grow up when I went from elementary school to junior high school. In the sixth grade, I could still play kickball on the playground, walk home with my best buddy, Larry Cooper, with our arms over each other's shoulders, swap hats, share lunches, chase cats and girls, and throw rocks on the way home from school. When we went off to junior high school we had to talk and walk differently. We learned to smoke cigarettes and act “bad.” Guys were now in the locker room changing clothes for gym, so everybody was slightly homophobic. Because of the new rules for behavior, we had to be scared about any physical contact with another guy.



Thought Question 10.1

When did childhood end for you? What childhood events influenced your attitudes about change? How have those events affected your willingness or ability to deal with changes in your present circumstances?

MOVING Another childhood event that may affect your reaction to change has to do with moving and the meaning of *home*. Some people lived in the same house the whole time they were growing up, and some had to move every two years whether they liked it or not. Perhaps they grew up in a military family, or a parent worked for an organization that frequently required relocation. People who lived in the same home the whole time they were growing up probably have a reaction to life changes different from the person who moved a dozen times.

In *Necessary Losses*, Viorst (1986) points out that sometimes, parents just walk into a room and say, “Okay, pack your bags. We’re moving, and you have two days to be ready to leave.” The kids are left standing there, feeling confused, wondering, “Well, don’t I get to think about this? What about my friends? What am I going to do with my pets? And the school play is next week.” Some parents may respond with “That’s too bad. Pack your bags and hurry up.” The family is in the car and gone before anyone knows it, and there is little time for reaction. Sometimes, the kids don’t get to acknowledge their grief about the losses involved in moving. Even if it is positive for the family in the long run, it is important to deal with the process of transition. Some parents forget that adults don’t handle life’s surprises very well, let alone children.

After a number of such moves, some people decide that it isn’t worth trying to make new friends because they’re going to be gone soon anyway. Others get to the point where endings are no big deal, and they seem unaffected by them. They come into a new school and make new friends immediately because they have learned that if connections are going to be made, they had better be made quickly. In either case, the early experience of continual change may have a later effect in life when other

necessary transitions occur. Some learn to be superficial because they feel that nothing is ever going to last. Their method of coping may be to remain detached to avoid disappointment. This style may make it difficult to make connections with others later in life, even when connections are desired. Some people learn to handle frequent change by displaying disruptive behavior. They may continue this pattern into adulthood whenever there are life-altering changes that they feel unable to avoid.

LEAVING HOME Another event that indicates the formal end of childhood is leaving home. Leaving home is seldom a lightweight issue for anyone. The time of departure from the nest has implications for trust, commitment, risk, and support from the world. There is a big difference between the person who was kicked out of the house at 15 after an angry confrontation and the person who left home at 25 with his or her parents saying, “Please come back for dinner on Sunday and bring your laundry.” Years later, those two people will have very different reactions to changes in their lives. They will also have different coping styles for dealing with the uncertainties of life’s events, many of which are beyond our control.

Adult Transitions

People used to think that once you became an adult you magically became finished developmentally and remained that way the rest of your life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many developmental psychologists believe that most development—mental, physical, and emotional—occurs in adulthood. That will be even truer as life expectancy and the rate of technological change increase.

Whatever your style of coping, as an adult you will deal with a significant number of **marker events** (these are called marker events because they mark a change in adult status and responsibilities): leaving school or college, starting a job or career, getting married, having children, changing physically, changing jobs or careers, and having to care for children and parents at the same time (the “sandwich generation”). Is it any wonder that some people have midlife crises? As positive and enriching as some of those marker events can be, there is also an aspect of loss in each.

Weighing the trade-offs beforehand might make it easier to adjust to a new situation and to embrace its positive aspects. For example, let’s consider the decision to get married. Many couples, once they become engaged, never explore any of the potential problem areas of the relationship. On a conscious level, they agree to look only at the bright side and think about what the future holds. On an unconscious level, both may be experiencing fears as the wedding date approaches. Threatening to cancel the wedding after an argument may be the result of ignoring the unavoidable losses inherent in moving from single life to married life. The “*wedding*

bell blues” is an indication that all the implications of a given decision may not have been considered; hence the reservations at the last minute.

You may think that because I suggest considering the loss involved in such a decision, I’m not supporting the institution of marriage. It is precisely because I am in favor of the nuclear family and the institution of marriage that I encourage people to talk about the endings related to new beginnings. Each partner will have to give up certain things in return for receiving the benefits of what marriage can provide. For instance, both members of the couple sacrifice a degree of freedom and autonomy. By considering what each is giving up, they can enhance their ability to receive what is on the other side of the door that they open together. Relationships can actually be stronger when couples have explored what they are leaving behind. Perhaps the divorce rate would go down if there were as much premarital counseling as there is premarital sex.

As another example of the trade-offs, consider a man I’ll call “Jack,” who had a great deal of difficulty after getting a promotion. He couldn’t understand why getting the job he had wanted for years would leave him depressed. The problem was that he had spent so much time looking at all the things this new position would bring him—the raise, the prestige, and the excitement of the new life for his family—that he didn’t pay any attention to the price he would have to pay for getting it. The whole family had to move from one coast to the other, selling the home they had lived in for 15 years. His wife had to leave behind a friend she had known since childhood, and his children had to leave schools and friends they liked and enjoyed. Jack made more money, but he also worked longer hours, had more responsibilities, and felt more job pressure.

This does not mean “Don’t take risks.” It just means that for every “yes,” there is a corresponding “no” in some other aspect of life. Remember that all decisions are made on the basis of incomplete information. Seldom is anyone 100 percent sure that a decision is right. Listening to and considering all parts—positive, negative, and ambivalent—will make you more comfortable with the final decision. When going through life’s transitions, the part that is reluctant to change sometimes simply needs time to grieve for the loss of what is ending. Acknowledging and dealing with that grief can enable a person to embrace the new order and move ahead with greater certainty.

*“What we call the beginning is often the end.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.”*

T. S. Eliot

Coming to Terms with Old Age

Most people look forward to the golden years when they can finally retire. Part of the American dream is living comfortably in retirement and enjoying leisure time. But, it is also a time of endings and letting go of former ways of life. Giving up a lifetime occupation can be unsettling. For many, a major part of their identity is tied up in their work; it is important to acknowledge that importance in order to move toward developing a new identity in old age.

One man who came to me for counseling was distraught about his impending retirement. He felt compelled to retire at a young enough age that he still had the physical capability to be active, but he was overwhelmed at the thought of quitting his job. Through counseling he came to understand that having been required to quit school and go to work at an early age had profoundly affected his life. From childhood on, he had believed that his worth as a human being was directly related to what he produced. As an adult, he felt that his main role in the family was to provide for everyone’s welfare. He also realized that part of his fear of retirement was based on his experience of friends who had passed away shortly after retiring. He was afraid that if he retired, he too might die in a short time. It was a self-imposed double bind: If he didn’t retire soon, he might not have the physical ability to do the things he wanted to do, but if he did retire, he might not live long enough to enjoy those things anyway. Giving himself permission to focus on some of his own needs and to develop a belief that he was more than a paycheck to his family helped him resolve his problems. He also needed time to separate retirement from the notion of death.

Regardless of whether one has had a specific career, the later stage of life is when people consider the meaning that their life has held. It is also the time to confront the issues of dying, as well as determine the focus of one’s energy in the time remaining. Helping the younger generation may be the focus of middle age, but integrity—evaluating what one has done with one’s life—is the key element in old age, according to Erikson. That means coming to terms with what one has done with one’s life and giving it meaning.

Some people are incapacitated mentally and physically by the time they are 65 years old. Others may live active lives and be productive in many ways well into their 80s. Regardless of the exact age when one approaches the end of one’s life, there are some issues that are universal in dealing with the aging process. These include staying connected to family and community, evaluating and making sense of one’s life, changing the emphasis and priorities of time and energy, and developing a sense of purpose in life.

More and more people are complaining about the lack of leisure time in their lives. At the same time, that may be the very thing people have the most of in old age. While older people may be assessing their lives and putting things in perspective, it may be good for younger people to consider how to have more balance in life while still in a position to effect change.

“Perhaps one has to be really old before one learns to be amused rather than shocked.”

Pearl Buck

BALANCING ACT A book by R. N. Boles (1978) entitled *The Three Boxes of Life* describes the areas in which we place importance and emphasis: the box of learning, the box of work, and the box of play. Boles’ thesis is that we are out of balance in our society because emphasis is put on only one particular box during each stage in life. Generally, we focus on learning when young and on working when middle-aged, supposedly reserving play for old age. Boles points out the benefits of spending a more equal amount of time in each of the boxes during each of the different stages of life.

Research on adjustment in old age supports the theory that good mental health comes from being involved in different activities (James et al., 2011). Even very old people are happiest when still learning and acquiring new skills. A great deal of satisfaction is derived from volunteer work and its accompanying sense of accomplishment. Play is important, but it might be healthiest for people of all ages to balance the three boxes in their lives.

The ultimate adjustment in old age is adjusting to the inevitability of death, the onset of which is declining health. In old age, people must learn to cope with the loss of physical strength and ability. And the longer we live, the more likely it is that we will have dealt with the deaths of friends and relatives. Even though death is an inevitable part of the life cycle, it is still a difficult subject to deal with in our society.

As medical advances create legal issues around life and death, this topic will have to be addressed further in the future. When we have the means to support life even when there is no sign of brain activity, the question arises of when someone is actually dead. Another issue currently being addressed concerns the right to die. When more people who are terminally ill begin to consider assisted suicide as an answer, society will need to discuss the issues of death and dying on deeper levels.

TRANSITIONAL TIMES

When contending with the normal passages in life and with the necessary losses inherent in those passages, most people go through a similar process. Bill Bridges (1980) describes this process as having three phases: (a) an **ending**, followed by (b) a period of confusion and distress (called the **neutral zone**), leading to (c) a **new beginning**. These stages may seem obvious, but it is difficult for some people to let themselves go through all of them. Some people want to deny that an ending has even happened. Some try to avoid an ending by starting something new long before they are ready. In our society, it is difficult to allow time out, and few

people take the time needed to be in the *neutral zone* that is necessary before entering a new phase in life. The steps may be simple (dealing with the ending, neutral zone, and beginning), but we have much to learn about how to use them to the best advantage. According to Bridges, there are some basic rules that are useful to remember:

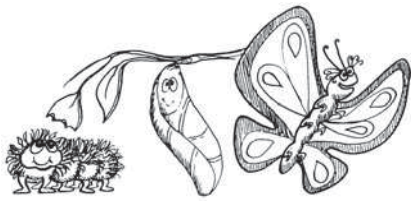
Rule 1—You will find yourself coming back in new ways to old activities when you are in transition: For example, we frequently take up old hobbies again as a source of comfort in times of change. When there are events in our lives that require dealing with the new and unknown, it is often comforting to return to activities that are a predictable source of pleasure.

Rule 2—Every transition begins with an ending: We have to let go of the old thing, both outwardly and inwardly, before we can pick up the new. Many people make it difficult to proceed through a transitional time in life by refusing to acknowledge that an ending has happened. They cling to the belief that they can hold on to all the old elements of their life while simultaneously entering a new phase.

Rule 3—Although it is advantageous to understand your own style of dealing with endings, some part of you will resist that understanding as though your life depended on it: For example, some people resort to a particular pattern of behavior (avoidance, denial, or self-destructiveness) whenever they have to deal with change in their lives. The behavior pattern may not help them deal with the situation, yet they insist on doing it.

Part of the reluctance to deal with endings is that it often requires learning a whole new way of being. *It is hard enough to stop doing the things that don’t work, let alone the things that do!* And that is often exactly what is required. What was valuable and successful at one stage may be the very thing causing difficulty in another. The following guidelines are important in searching for meaning and purpose in life, especially in life’s second half (Bridges, 1980):

- **We must unlearn the style of mastering the world that we used to take us through the first half of life:** Things that were useful at age 25 may not be at all helpful at age 50.
- **We must resist the temptation to abandon the developmental journey and stay forever at some attractive stopping place:** Perhaps you have heard the term *arrested development*? The person who was popular in college may have had a wonderful time during those years, but if he or she never grows beyond the behavior and attitudes of those times, he or she will probably restrict his or her choices in later adult life.
- **We must recognize that it will take effort to regain the inner home:** Regaining a sense of well-being and comfort after a transitional period takes commitment. Finding a previous sense of peacefulness and contentment requires dealing with all aspects of change.



Endings

To move into the neutral zone and be able to address new beginnings, it is valuable to consider how the following four aspects of dealing appropriately with endings pertain to your situation:

- **Disengagement:** Most changes start with a need to separate from the old ways. The process of transition begins with the clarification that comes from letting go, whether it is a physical or mental letting go.
- **Disidentification:** Change requires that we define ourselves differently. In most cases, this disidentification process is really the inner side of the disengagement process. We need to loosen the bonds of who we think we are so we can move toward a new identity.
- **Disenchantment:** To really change—not just switch positions—you must realize that part of your old reality was in your head and not out there in the real world. The world can still be a beautiful place even if you give up some of your fairy tales about life.
- **Disorientation:** This is a necessary part of transition, yet some of our fears come from going into this emptiness. Most people understand the importance of not jumping right into another marriage after divorce, for example, but it can be difficult to stay in that in-between phase and just be with yourself. Yet, out of the confusion can come clarification about future moves. Perhaps the prospect of staying with the unknown of the neutral zone awakens old fears about death and abandonment, but that is all the more reason why it is important to spend time there.

All of these aspects of dealing with endings are evident in a divorce, for example. The process of divorce means disengaging from someone, though the psychological disengagement may occur before, during, or even long after the actual divorce decree. Before one is free to move on, there needs to be *disengagement* from the relationship. *Disidentification* takes place when one separates one's identity from the relationship and the view of oneself as a married person. It is reflected in the internal evaluation of who you are now that you aren't married, and who you want to be as a single person. *Disenchantment* may mean giving up the belief that someone else is responsible for providing meaning,

purpose, approval, or happiness in life. *Disorientation* may be the confusion of "What's next?" Do you want to have another relationship, and if so, when? How long is long enough to heal and let go? Who might be a potential future partner, and what traits should that person have? Answering these questions is part of the work to be done in the disorientation of the neutral zone.

The Neutral Zone

After dealing with the ending phase of transition, it is time to be in the neutral zone. Bridges (1980) offers the following suggestions for how best to use that time to assess the past and the future.

- Find a regular time to be alone.
- Begin a log of neutral-zone experiences.
- Take this pause in the action of your life to write an autobiography.
- Take this opportunity to discover what you really want.
- Think of what would be un-lived in your life if it ended today.
- Take a few days to go on your own version of a passage journey.

The neutral zone provides time to do whatever you do as though it were part of an elaborate ritual, and to do it with your total attention. For once in your life, you don't have to produce results or accomplish anything. Whatever you are feeling is just you, and you are there to be alone with and really listen to yourself. "Treating ourselves like appliances that can be unplugged and plugged in again, at will, or cars that stop and start with the twist of a key, we have forgotten the importance of fallow time and winter and rests in music" (Bridges, 1980, p. 130).

All too often people who have gone through a difficult time in life hurry on without having time to consider the full impact of the change. It is during the time of transition that we have the opportunity to reevaluate and fully consider the possibilities of making plans and considering a new path in life. Many people stumble upon some major truth about themselves, then get up and proceed as though nothing has happened. This is the importance of spending an adequate time in the neutral zone. Be with yourself as fully as possible for as long as possible and listen for the small inner voice that might have some considerable wisdom to offer about the next course of action.

New Beginnings

There are two signs to look for to determine when you are ready to move on to a new beginning. The first is the reaction of your friends: Do they see what you propose to do as something new or as simply an old pattern? The second

“Do not go gently into that dark night. Old age should burn and rave at close of day; rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

Dylan Thomas

is from the transition process itself: Have you really moved through endings into the neutral zone and found there the beginning you now want to follow, or is this beginning a way of avoiding an ending or of aborting the neutral-zone experience?

Once you have allowed the direction of your change to emerge, there are steps you can take to get the results you want. The first is to stop getting ready and act. Some people spend so much time waiting for a sign that they are doing the right thing that they never do anything. The second thing you can do is begin to identify yourself with the final results of the new beginning. There are many things that aren't very enjoyable to do, such as folding the laundry, but the end results can be satisfying and worthwhile: having the laundry done and being able to move on to other things. Imagining that you are through your transition and actively involved in the change in your life can bring good feelings.

A final note: It is important to keep the need for developmental growth in perspective. When dealing with changes in life circumstances, it helps to have a sense of humor. Even if you consider becoming a better person to be the purpose of life, you still have to deal with the everyday tasks of life. Keep in mind that after enlightenment comes the laundry!

Thought Question 10.2

What do you want to accomplish as an adult? What do you want to have done before you reach “old age”? What events have happened in your life that you think will influence your transitions through adulthood?

DEATH AND DYING ISSUES

We live in a “death-denying” society, according to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1975), whose book *On Death and Dying* was a standard in the field for years. Even though there may be some criticism of her earlier work, she is responsible in part for bringing much needed attention to the care of terminally ill people. She says, for example, that we have at least 50 euphemisms for the word *dead*, for example: “kicked the bucket,” “six feet under,” “crossed over,” “gone to meet her maker,” “peaceful slumber,” “cashed in his chips,” “croaked,” “bit the dust,” “beamed up,” “passed on,” and “bought the farm.” If language reflects what is important in a culture, then in ours, it must be important to not mention death.

The same forces that have influenced our language are apparent even in hospitals. Kübler-Ross started her work with terminally ill patients in hospitals, where she noticed that doctors and nurses often had a difficult time coping with someone who was dying. Logically, it seems that medical personnel would be more willing than anyone to discuss feelings about death with their patients. This didn't appear to be the case. She found that some doctors not only wouldn't talk to the patient about dying, but didn't even want family members to mention the possibility. That has changed considerably over the past 35 years, partially as a result of the work Kübler-Ross has done and the hospice program she started.

Why is it that we have such difficulty dealing with death? In part, it is due to the vast changes that have taken place in our society since the turn of the last century:

- **Medical advances and the infant mortality rate:** In the early 1900s, the majority of people lived in large families in rural settings. Nearly one child in 10 died before reaching their first year, and childhood diseases were far more likely to be fatal. Consequently, it was not uncommon for children in large families to experience the death of at least one sibling. Conditions today are different because of smaller families, a lower infant mortality rate (about one in 100 births), and the eradication of certain childhood diseases.
- **Death as part of the life cycle:** Given that many people in rural settings had an agricultural lifestyle, they were much closer to the natural cycle of life. The passing of seasons, the raising of crops and livestock, and closeness to the earth helped them to see death as part of the natural order of things. A hundred years ago, death was not something to be conquered, but an event to be accepted. Today, death is fought in many ways. People seem preoccupied with beating the grim reaper rather than accepting death as inevitable.
- **Dealing with the reality of death:** A century ago, when someone died, the immediate family was intimately involved in the burial process. If Uncle Joe

fell off the barn roof and broke his neck, he was laid out on the kitchen table. The family built the coffin, dressed him, conducted the services, and more than likely buried him in the family cemetery out back. That process was beneficial because it gave people time to grieve for the loss they had suffered. Today, 90 percent of people die in hospitals, often under conditions that severely limit visitations. The hospital then takes them to the mortuary, the mortuary takes them to the funeral home, and the funeral home takes them to the cemetery, where a machine digs the grave. Then a minister, who might not even know the person, delivers the eulogy.

- **Exposure to death:** At the turn of the century, death was real to people; when someone died, the event felt significant and personal to those left behind. But outside of these significant experiences, people weren't confronted with death constantly. Today, we hear about death every day, all day. The media bombards us with news about catastrophes and death tolls. People have had to learn to numb themselves to such constant, impersonal information. As a result, when a death occurs that has significance in their lives, many people aren't prepared to deal with it.

Stages of Dealing with Loss

Kübler-Ross introduced the stages that people go through in dealing with death. While she asserted that people don't necessarily go through the stages in lock-step order, there are some who criticized her work because the use of the word "stages" implied that they did. And, there may be cultural and religious differences regarding dealing with death that would challenge some of her assumptions about the need for the bargaining stage (Boyd and Bee, 2009). Even so, her work is important for many people and has given a vocabulary with which to start the discussion about coming to terms with death and dying. The stages are as follows:

- **Denial:** Most people first respond to a traumatic event with "No, no, it can't be happening." They want to believe that it isn't really happening. This can last from a day to a week or even longer in some cases.
- **Anger:** Anger is a normal response to accepting the reality of an event. Most people feel some degree of anger over the loss of someone or something that has been an important part of the life. Life isn't fair, it isn't equal, and sometimes bad things do happen to good people for no reason, and that makes us angry.
- **Bargaining:** Once people realize that anger doesn't change the circumstances, they try all forms of bargaining: "I promise I'll never ever again . . ." Unfortunately, during this stage, some people feel guilty even when they had absolutely nothing to do

with what happened. They may have a distorted idea that by feeling bad, they can undo what happened.

- **Depression:** People who are depressed as the result of a loss need to know that it is a normal response and part of the process of healing. I have known people who have actually wondered what was wrong with them when they were still having problems a few weeks after the death of a parent. Grief is a normal reaction. This is much different from the sadness that some people feel without knowing the reason. People for whom depression is an ongoing problem may need to seek help from a professional.
- **Acceptance:** When people have gone through all of the previous stages, they are likely to arrive at a point of resolution. But if they have skipped any stage, they may prolong the process.

In my experience in working with clients over the years, I have found that it is useful to think of the process as more like going through cycles of all the stages over and over while moving from one phase to another. For example, many years ago, I lost a good friend in a car accident. I still remember today how I felt like I was spinning over and over through all of the stages. Even in the first moments when I heard that she had died, I remember having all of the reactions, though mostly I felt denial. As I moved into being angry about why had this happened, there were mornings I would wake up and think that I had dreamed the whole event: Back in denial. While spending most of the time in one stage at a time as I moved through the process and began to cope with the loss, I found that I still cycled through all of them a number of times.

Kübler-Ross' theory originally dealt with patients who were dying of cancer and were dealing with their own impending death, but the stages can also apply to dealing with the loss or the death of others. And, these stages apply to more than just the loss experienced due to death. People often need to go through a period of mourning over the endings or losses resulting from changes in any number of areas of their lives.

The Grieving Process

In *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (1991, 2008), William Worden presents the following advice to those who are grieving. He maintains that the four tasks of mourning are:

1. **To accept the reality of the loss:** Many people deny that a death has occurred; thus, the first task of grieving is to come to terms with the fact that the person is dead and will not be returning. Accepting the reality of the loss takes time because it is an emotional as well as a cognitive process.
2. **To work through the pain of grief:** It is necessary for the bereaved person to go through the pain of grief. This may be difficult for some because of

contradictory messages from our society. Although grief is expected to some degree, our society is uncomfortable with extended mourning and therefore may convey messages implying that mourners are “only feeling sorry for themselves.” Remember that those who avoid all conscious grieving usually experience some form of depression sooner or later.

3. **To adjust to an environment from which the deceased is missing:** The survivor usually is not aware of all the roles played by the deceased until he or she is gone. Not only do the bereaved have to adjust to the loss of the roles previously played by the deceased, but death confronts them with the challenge of readjusting to their own sense of self. Adjustment in one’s sense of the world may also be occurring. Loss through death can challenge one’s fundamental life values and philosophical beliefs. It is not unusual for the bereaved to feel they have lost direction in life.
4. **To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life:** Some people have difficulty understanding the notion of emotional withdrawal. If we think of it as relocation, then the task for the bereaved is to evolve an ongoing relationship with the thoughts and memories they associate with the person who died, but to do it in a way that allows them to continue with their lives. The task for the bereaved, possibly with the help of a counselor, is not to give up the relationship with the deceased, but to find an appropriate place for the dead in their emotional lives. This needs to be a place that enables them to go on living effectively in the world.

Anyone interested in assisting the bereaved needs to be familiar with the broad range of behaviors that fall under the description of normal grief. Normal grief reactions can be described under four general categories.

1. **Feelings:** Many feelings may be experienced to varying degrees. These include, but are not limited to, sadness, anger, loneliness, fatigue, helplessness, shock, yearning, emancipation, numbness, and even relief.
2. **Physical sensations:** The following are some of the most common sensations experienced by people who are going through the grieving process: hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the chest, tightness in the throat, oversensitivity to noise, breathlessness, weakness in the muscles, lack of energy, and dry mouth.
3. **Cognitions:** Many different thought patterns mark the experience of grief. Certain thoughts are common in the early stages of grieving and usually disappear after a short time. But sometimes, if such thoughts persist, they can trigger feelings that can lead to depression or anxiety. Common thought processes include disbelief, confusion, preoccupation, hallucinations, or a sense of the presence of the person who died.
4. **Behaviors:** The following behaviors are common after a loss and usually correct themselves over time: appetite and sleep disturbances, absent-minded behavior, crying and sighing, over-activity, dreams of the deceased, avoiding reminders of the deceased, and carrying or treasuring objects that belonged to the deceased.

THE TIME FRAME FOR GRIEVING People who haven’t experienced the death of a loved one may want to know how long it will take to get to the stage of acceptance. Healing is a very personal thing and depends greatly on the circumstances. The response to the death of someone who has been ill for some time will undoubtedly be very different from the response to a sudden and unexpected death. One benchmark of a completed grief reaction is when the survivor is able to think of the deceased without pain. Also, mourning is finished when a person can reinvest his or her emotions back into life and in the living. In general, though, here are some guidelines on what to expect:

- **The first two or three days:** During this time, the impact of the trauma may be the strongest. This is the period when a person is most likely to be in shock and/or denial. Some people move into heavy grieving at this point; others are still numb from having to deal with all of the circumstances surrounding the loss.
- **The next two or three weeks:** It is common for a person to have a loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, inability to focus, and a tendency to cry every day during this period.
- **The following two or three months:** This is the time when people often need the most support. Everyone wants to help for the first few days or weeks, but after a few months, people go back to their own lives, while the person suffering the loss may be just starting to recover. That is a very tenuous position, and people feel vulnerable during this period. It is during this time that it is possible to really help someone who has experienced a loss by reaching out and letting him or her know that the support is still there. For some people, it may take as long as eight months to a year to feel as though the healing process has begun to diminish in intensity.
- **The next two or three years:** There seems to be an important psychological turning point after the one-year mark. Some people report feeling that they not only were healed, but also could give themselves permission to start getting on with life. However, it is not uncommon for people to have emotional reactions for years after the event during special times that call up old memories, such as holidays and anniversaries.

“When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice.”

Native American saying

How to Help Someone

Though she wrote it a number of years ago, in the book *Parting Is Not Goodbye* (1986) Kelly Osmont offers some excellent information on how to be helpful with someone who is going through the grieving process. When assessing the needs of a grieving person, it helps to understand the circumstances. There are enormous differences in the grief process that depend on the strength of the attachment, the age of the person who died, how the person died, and the gender of the survivor. Don't assume that the death of a 90-year-old grandmother will be mourned in the same way as the death of a 5-year-old child. Perhaps the most important aspect to consider is the strength of attachment the person had to the deceased. It might be more difficult to lose a grandparent than a parent in some situations. That could be true if the grandparent was a significant source of love, care, and support. Also, in our society, it is usually more difficult for men than for women to express their grief openly. Please consider the following guidelines as suggestions only. Most important, trust your heart and your instincts:

- **Don't try to lessen the loss with easy answers:** It is more important for the bereaved to feel your presence than to hear anything you might say. There are no ready phrases that take away the pain of loss. Phrases that usually don't help include: “There must have been a reason” (not all things in life make sense); “I know how you feel” (none of us knows exactly how someone else feels); “It was God's will” (first, find out about the survivor's religious beliefs); “Time will heal” (time alone doesn't always heal; it also takes experiencing the grieving process); “She isn't hurting anymore” (so what); “It must have been his time” (how do you know); and “Things always work out for the best” (sometimes they don't). Phrases that do help include: “This must be painful for you” (then the griever feels free to describe the pain); “You must have been very close to her” (the survivor can talk about the relationship); “It must be hard to accept” (listen to the difficulties); “I really miss him; he was a special person. But that can't compare to how much you must miss him. Tell me what it's like” (then just listen).

- **Don't feel you must have something to say:** Your presence is enough. Especially with fresh grief, your embrace, touch, and sincere sorrow are all the mourner may need. Be sure to call or visit the survivor, no matter how much time has passed since the death. The griever still appreciates knowing you care.

- **Take the initiative:** Don't merely say, “If there's anything I can do, give me a call.” Make specific offers of help. Each thoughtful gesture keeps the survivor from having to continually reach out for assistance.

- **Help with the children and everyday concerns:** You might run errands, answer the phone, prepare meals, or do the laundry. These seemingly minor tasks loom large to the survivor, for grief drastically depletes physical energy. Invite children on family outings. They shouldn't be shielded from grief, but occasionally, they need a break from the sadness at home.

- **Listen:** A bereaved person desperately needs a listener who is accepting, supportive, and willing to listen patiently to often repetitive stories. The need to tell the story decreases as healing progresses. And each time the story is told, the finality of the death sinks in a little more. When feelings of anger, frustration, disappointment, fear, and sadness are expressed, accept those feelings. If the survivor keeps them bottled inside, it will slow the healing process.

- **Allow the expression of guilt feelings:** A natural reaction to hearing someone express guilt is to respond with, “You mustn't feel guilty. I'm sure you did everything you could.” Don't try to rescue people from their guilt feelings, which are natural and normal during the grief process. What most people actually feel is regret. We feel regret when we wish we had somehow been able to change things. Ask non-leading questions: “What could you have done differently?” These help survivors conclude on their own that they did the best that they could.

- **Allow survivors to grieve in their own way:** Don't push mourners to get over the loss. If they need to rake leaves or chop wood to release energy and tension, let them. If they want to pore over old pictures or read every book on grief they can find, let them.

- **Accept mood swings:** Expect good days and bad days for some time. Gradually, the good days become more frequent, but bad ones will occur even a year or more after the death of a loved one.

- **Remember special days and times:** Double your efforts to be sensitive to the mourner's needs during difficult times of the day or on days with special meaning, such as holidays, the loved one's birthday or wedding anniversary, and the anniversary of the death.

- **Know that recovery takes time:** Don't expect the grieving person to be “over it” within a few weeks. Recovery doesn't happen the day after the funeral or even two months after it, as many people believe. Sometimes, the real grieving is just beginning by then. It may be more than a year before you see the results of your caring and support. If the mourner doesn't seem to be recovering at all despite your best efforts and the passage of time, suggest professional help to assist in learning new ways of coping. Find out which

professionals in your region are experienced in working with the bereaved. Don't assume that all counselors and clergy are trained in this area.

• **Write or verbally share your memories of the one who died:** During the first few months after a death, there is a tendency to focus on the survivors, while the survivors are focusing on the one who died. By relating your memories of the deceased, you are offering a precious memento to the grieving person. Your love and

concern are shown not only in what you share, but in the fact that you took the time to do so.

• **Know that your friend will always remember his or her loved one:** For the rest of the survivor's life, tears may be shed when a special memory is recalled. Your friend is who he or she is today because of having loved that person. Denying the deceased's past existence denies a part of your friend. Love your friend's past as well as his or her present, and you and your friend will be the richer for it.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- Stages of development and important transitions occur throughout life.
- When transitions occur it's useful to ask what is lost as well as what is gained.
- Your success in handling one transition will affect later ones.
- A major source of satisfaction (or lack of it) in life is career choice. Be thoughtful and choose a career that fits your personality.
- Meaningful leisure activities are important to successful life transitions.
- Listening and not offering suggestions is the best way to help someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one.

Chapter Review

LIFE SPAN DEVELOPMENT

Many of the predictable transitions in life have been altered drastically during the course of the past generation. People are leaving childhood faster but taking longer to attain adulthood. Life expectancy has increased, with the possibility that many people will experience a second adulthood rather than, or as part of, a midlife crisis. According to Erikson, even though the timing of major life events has changed, there are still developmental stages that everyone contends with. How a person resolves the conflicts of each stage has implications for the manner in which the challenges of subsequent stages are met. Maslow's hierarchy of needs determines whether someone has the time, energy, or inclination to accept the challenges of life presented by the maturational process.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

One's selection of a life's work has significant implications for part of one's overall life satisfaction. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore and understand the process of deciding on an occupation and selecting a career. It is important that one's personality type fit one's occupation.

LIFE PASSAGES

Many significant events that occur during childhood may influence how you go through subsequent transitions in life. These events include when childhood ended for you and how you left home. To enter a new phase in life, it is necessary to leave some things behind. There are necessary losses inherent in many of life's transitions, no matter how beneficial the new choices you make may be. Growth and development continue through adulthood, and how you experience transitions at one stage of life

has implications for later ones. Old age is a time of readjusting priorities and creating a balance that gives meaning and purpose to life.

TRANSITIONAL TIMES

Many people have difficulty with transitions because they avoid going through the required stages or mix up the order in which they go through them. When a major life change occurs, you need to deal with the ending phase first. This is followed by time in the neutral zone to allow incorporation and integration of the events and their meaning. Only then is it time to address the options that represent a new beginning. Some of the issues that need to be addressed during a transitional stage in life are disengagement, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation. There are specific behaviors that can assist you on the journey through life's stages.

DEATH AND DYING ISSUES

Many of our inhibitions about dealing with death and dying have to do with the significant changes in our society since the turn of the century. In the agricultural society of a hundred years ago, death usually had personal meaning for people. These days, we are exposed to death every day in the media while being insulated from the process of dealing with it when it does affect us personally. The stages of coping with death or loss are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Although you may not go through the stages in an orderly fashion, it is usually necessary to have experienced each of the stages in order to heal. There is a somewhat predictable timetable that most people go through in coping with loss, and there are things one can do to help someone who is coping with the death of a loved one.

Website Resources

Adult Development and Aging: APA Division 20

<http://apadiv20.phhp.ufl.edu/>

Career Development

http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/Home_Page

Compassionate Friends (support for bereaved parents)

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

Articles on Grief and Loss

<http://www.aarp.org/griefandloss>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life, or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your responses to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. When you were young, did you get messages to “hurry up” in life or to “stay little”? Did you feel pushed to grow up fast, or were you held back? What are some of the beliefs that you developed about change during childhood? Are there beliefs that you would like to replace?

2. When did childhood end for you? What childhood events influenced your attitudes about change? How have those events affected your willingness or ability to deal with changes in your present circumstances?
3. Did you live in the same house while growing up, or did your family move a lot? Did your parents divorce? If they did, what was it like when they remarried, if they did? When changes occurred in the family, how were they handled?
4. What transitions have you experienced in life? How did you handle the ending, neutral zone, and new beginning of the transition? What do the transitions of adulthood mean to you? How was the information in the chapter about going through transitions useful to you?
5. What do you think you will be doing in five years? In 10 years? What would you need to be doing in the next year if you were to be working toward those goals?
6. What do you want to accomplish as an adult? What do you want to have done before you reach “old age”? What events have happened in your life that you think will influence your transitions through adulthood?
7. If 50 is the new 30, as some are saying, how do you think that will affect you?
8. What do you think happens when you die? How does that influence how you live? What kind of funeral do you want to have, and how do you want to be remembered?
9. What did you learn in this chapter about how to help people who have experienced the loss of someone close?
10. How do you deal with endings in general? Do you try to ignore them? Do you deny their necessity by hanging on when you should let go?

Over the years, it has been a fairly common occurrence to have one of my older students come up to me at the end of the course and say, “I wish I had taken a class like this when I was still in my twenties. But, who knows, maybe I wouldn’t have been ready for it then. I hope that the other students have been listening and take this stuff to heart. Life really does get better when you think about what you are doing and why you are doing it.” This sentiment is shared by former students I’ve run into in the store, the bank, and on the street. These students tell me how much they learned, and how they didn’t realize it until they got out into the world and started living. Work, relationships, kids, and dealing with family have a way of doing that. It pleases me that many of them say that they remember more now than they thought they had actually learned at the time.

I had one student tell me, “I know it may have looked like I wasn’t paying much attention sitting in the back of the room, but I was really taking in what you were saying. I just hadn’t been around people who talked about those kinds of things before. These days, when I think about what I want to do with my future, I remember some of the questions that you told us to ask ourselves. And I guess I really have learned to think about my goals, purpose, and direction. I’m much more willing to look at my relationships and how to make things better.”

It seems that many of life’s lessons just need to get relearned for every generation; some things we seem to learn best the hard way. It may be that, unfortunately, some *wisdom* isn’t directly transferable. But, it just may well be that it is still important to plant seeds now in order for them to bloom later.

I’m sure that you have heard the quote, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” from Socrates. It seems he had been asking his students to challenge the accepted beliefs of the times, to challenge the accepted way of behaving, and to think for themselves—so he was tried and put to death for heresy. Socrates could have chosen prison or exile instead of death, but he felt that these alternatives robbed him of all that made life important and useful: discussing and examining the world around him and thinking about how to make the world a better place.

People who examine their lives, think about who they are and how they got that way, and have plans for where they want to go are happier people. Knowing your true self will help you work more effectively to reach your goals. It will lead you down the road to success. It will bring you a calmness that will improve your attitude and your relationships with others. No one has all the answers, but the search is what is important. Those who avoid examining their lives don’t have much control over where they end up. When you continue to evaluate what you are doing and how it is working for you, it means you can decide who you want to be and how you can become more of the person that you would like to be in the future.

If you want to know yourself better, you have to work at it. The good news is that it isn’t hard. Just spend time each day thinking about it. Relax and focus on what you want and how you would like to be. And, hopefully, *remember to remember* the things you have learned in the class and from this book.

When reviewing with students at the end of the course, we often talk about the important things that they will look back on and wish that they had known sooner in life. Some of these are:

- ***Be here now:*** The present is where life happens. All you ever have is the current moment.
- ***The meaning of any communication is the response you get:*** It is up to you to modify what you said if you didn’t get what you wanted.

- **Ride the horse you have, not the one you wish you had:** This is similar to the saying “play the hand you are dealt.” It’s all anyone can ever do.
- **Life isn’t fair, things aren’t equal, and nothing is certain:** Learn to forgive and move on.
- **Deal with it now, or deal with it later:** What you don’t know can hurt you. What you ignore will come back to bite you in the end.
- **Don’t hurt yourself, don’t hurt others, tell the truth:** Honesty is the best policy.
- **People’s problems can’t always wait:** People are more important than work or schedules.
- **When family and friends give you feedback or protest about your decisions, listen:** Some of them know what they’re talking about.
- **There are consequences for ignoring that little voice inside:** Call it intuition, conscience, or whatever. That little voice is usually looking out for us.
- **Always go to funerals and send sympathy cards:** We go to funerals not only to say goodbye, but to support those left behind. We might need similar support sometime.

In this chapter, we will cover additional ways to enhance your life. Positive psychology places the focus on what you can do to get more of what you want out of life. The information in the opening story can remind you of what you want to remember about life lessons. Life satisfaction, values clarification, and decision making can assist you in remembering the process by which you can accomplish those lessons. Given all the information presented in the text, there are undoubtedly areas of your life that you will want to improve. A section on personal change is included to provide the opportunity for “self therapy” regarding overcoming any self-defeating behaviors you have discovered. Lastly, this chapter covers the necessity for learning forgiveness: One way to ensure that your journey in life is more positive is to develop the ability to let go of the negative events that will inevitably occur and look forward to the next opportunity and challenge in life.

Learning Objectives for Chapter 11

By the end of this chapter, I want you to know the following. You can use this list to organize your note-taking.

1. What is *positive psychology*? Describe the three main areas studied as part of positive psychology. What is the *broaden-and-build* model?
2. What are *flow*, *mindfulness*, and *resilience*? Why are they important? What are the steps in finding flow?
3. Why is it important to clarify goals? What is the relationship between goals and values?
4. What are the four components of successful life goals?
5. Describe the five ways that people establish meaning in their lives.
6. From the section on *decision making*, what does the acronym ACTION mean?
7. Describe the four traits that foster inner happiness.
8. Describe the *two-for-one principle*.
9. From the section on *components of change*, describe the six stages listed in the *model for change*.
10. Describe the six parts of the *formula for change*.
11. What is forgiveness and why is it important?
12. What are the six suggestions that experts offer for healing?

Remember, in addition to knowledge there are two reasoning learning objectives for each chapter: identifying constructs and applying the information to your own life. So, as you read the material make notes on constructs and on those events and experiences that come to mind in your own life that relate to and illustrate the ideas.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology is the movement within the field of psychology that explores human strengths and focuses on how people can be successful and lead fuller lives. Positive psychology is, in many ways, the rebirth of the humanistic psychology movement (Levine and Moreland, 2006), which has always maintained the belief that traditional psychology tends to treat people as objects of study and focus on problems, weaknesses, and disorders. Positive psychology emphasizes people’s strengths and how

to use psychological principles to improve health and well-being. You can also think about it in the following ways:

- It focuses on the human capacity for creativity, love, wisdom, and free will.
- It is an arm of psychology that aims to prevent mental illness and cultivate human strengths such as courage, hope, and resilience (Seligman, 1998).
- Many fields of study ignore the question of the meaning of life, while positive psychology puts that question at the center of its enquiry (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002).

- It supports developing an optimistic point of view. Research supports the premise that optimistic individuals are less fearful, more willing to take risks, and are relatively happier (Peterson and Steen, 2009).

Humanistic psychology fell from favor for awhile. From the 1970s until the turn of the century, the emphasis on personal growth seemed to be fading. But in 1998 Martin Seligman, president of the American Psychological Association, identified positive psychology as a teachable and researchable area of study and helped launch the movement. Seligman and other researchers felt that the time was right to support changes that enabled people to see their lives as fulfilling and functional rather than stressful, anxiety ridden, and dysfunctional. He declared that the aim of positive psychology was to shift the focus from preoccupation with fixing the worst things in life to helping people develop positive qualities that improve all aspects of life (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By seeking to identify and promote human strengths, positive psychology offers psychology an important direction that is not exactly new, but does renew a focus that had fallen by the wayside (Funder, 2010).

Psychologists interested in positive psychology are involved in studying three main areas: *subjective experiences*, *positive individual traits*, and *social institutions that promote subjective well-being* (subjective well-being is another way of saying that you feel happy and satisfied with life).

Positive Subjective Experiences

Positive subjective experiences are the satisfying thoughts and feelings that people have. These include having positive emotions, being in a good mood, being happy, being in love, or having a sense of well-being. The more that a person has what he or she believes to be positive experiences, the more likely he or she is to experience success in marriage, friendships, and careers. These, in turn, lead to further good feelings and greater success in other areas of daily life (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005).

EMOTIONS AND MOODS As described in Chapter 4, **emotions** are powerful feelings, often seemingly uncontrollable, that produce physiological changes. People tend to focus more on negative feelings—sadness, anger, guilt, disgust, and fear—because of the sheer number of them and the unpleasant effect they have on us. Perhaps because negative emotions have evolutionary importance as a way of alerting people to potential threats or danger (the classic “fight or flight” response), they tend to narrow a person’s focus or awareness (Fredrickson and Branigan, 2005), but if persistent, this narrowed focus may have a detrimental effect.

Positive feelings have value and importance also. People who have positive feelings are more likely to help people in need, be involved in social interactions, be more creative, and try out new experiences (Fredrickson, 2001).

Barbara Fredrickson (1998) developed the **broaden-and-build model** to explain some of the results of positive emotions. Positive emotions open people up to a variety of new ways of being and behaving. Have you ever

noticed that children who are feeling happy and joyful often become more imaginative in their play and want to explore and learn things in the world around them? Similarly, when shown film clips of situations eliciting positive emotions, adults were far more likely to generate a lengthy list of activities that they would like to engage in than if they saw situations eliciting negative emotions. It appears that feeling joyful or content leads to thinking of more positive activities to engage in, whereas feeling negative emotions narrows people’s thoughts and reduces the number of possible future actions (Fredrickson and Branigan, 2005).

Positive emotions also seem to build up social, cognitive, and affective resources that can be drawn on later. This is part of the broaden-and-build concept. Positive emotions lead to a broader range of actions, which in turn build more personal resources, which again build more positive feelings. Fredrickson (2001) calls this the upward spiral of health.

Moods are related to emotions and may have a reciprocal relationship with them. Compared to emotions, moods are more global, long-lasting, and pervasive, and are thought of as general personality descriptions. Think about someone you know who you think is usually in a good mood. They are “up” most of the time and pleasant to be around. Now imagine that this person has just had a negative experience; maybe they got stuck in traffic or didn’t get the grade on a test that they were expecting. They may be angry or upset for awhile, but eventually they return to their relatively stable good mood.

When people are in a good mood they are more likely to believe that good things will happen to them. And, that frequently becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because they expect good things to happen, they unconsciously take actions that will in fact increase the likelihood of events turning out well. Being in a positive mood makes people more agreeable and helpful, less aggressive, and better decision makers (Isen, 2002).

So, when you are in a good mood, you are more likely to experience being happy. And, being happy can lead to developing a more positive mood. I’ll talk more about how to create happiness later in this chapter.

FINDING FLOW What activity so absorbs you that you lose all sense of time? For some fortunate people, it is their life’s work that produces such a state. For others, it is a hobby or a vocation. People have a number of ways of talking about the state of being “in the groove,” but most descriptions have in common a feeling of being alive, focused, energized, and one with what they are doing. They are fully in the present moment and experience increased satisfaction with life. In whatever situation it is that you experience that kind of feeling, being able to “go with the flow” is a positive subjective experience that adds value and meaning to life.

Researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1995) interviewed 90 leading figures in the fields of art, business, government, education, and science to find out more about creativity and its relationship to flow. He found common elements in the experiences of the people he interviewed

that are helpful in learning to develop the state of flow. These include the following:

- **Have a specific goal to look forward to:** Find something you are excited about accomplishing. Flow comes from balancing challenges and your perceived skill level.
- **Cultivate your curiosity and interests:** Make the effort to find new things to do that you find interesting.
- **Try to be surprised every day:** Look for new ways to experience life, and try to surprise someone else by some new behavior that others wouldn't expect.
- **Keep a record of your efforts:** Write down each day what surprised you and how you surprised others. Creative people often keep a journal. Keep track of your experiences and you might notice changes to explore with other activities.
- **Take charge of your schedule:** Carve out time for yourself when you are most likely to feel creative. Remember times when you have felt like you were in the zone, and recreate those situations.

MINDFULNESS Ellen Langer (2002) used the term **mindfulness** to refer to consciously becoming more aware of the present moment: the situation that one is in, and what is happening around one.

A way to understand the positive benefits of this concept is to consider what it means when you slip into a state of **mindlessness**. Many of us have had the experience of going on automatic pilot and responding to the world in a rehearsed manner. Many of us go about our day so locked into the expectations that we have for ourselves, and that we believe others have for us, that we miss out on life. You may even have had a conversation in which you realized that you hadn't heard a word the person was saying for the last three minutes. Mindfulness is the opposite of mindlessness and means paying true attention to what is going on around you.

Here's a story that demonstrates this. Two women were walking down the street when one said, "Do you hear that bird?" The other responded that she hadn't even been aware there was one and asked the first person how it was that she noticed. "It is all in what you pay attention to and what is important for you," was the response. The first woman then proceeded to take a number of coins from her purse and said, "Watch this." When she dropped the coins, a number of people stopped to look around, having heard the sound even though there was a fair amount of street noise at the time.

According to Langer, to become more mindful people need to (1) resist the impulse to control the uncertainty of everyday life; (2) make fewer judgments about themselves, others, and the situations they encounter; and (3) overcome the tendency to respond to others in an automatic fashion with the behavior they or others expect.

Positive Individual Traits

As covered in Chapter 3, **traits** are dimensions of personality, the individual differences and characteristics that we use to evaluate, interpret, and predict the behavior of others. For example, if you know someone who is easy to be around and gets along with other people, you might decide that they are highly agreeable, cooperative, and friendly. Positive traits are the qualities that help to explain why some people are happier and healthier than others. Positive traits influence how people react toward others and events in their lives.

Some traits are genetic, but a great number of others are learned. This is an important point about **positive individual traits**. They are skills that can be developed (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) through experience, training, self-discipline, and putting forth the effort that it takes to learn. The following information will help you to develop some of the traits that are useful in having a more positive life.

HOPE Hope is the condition in which a person believes that his or her expectations and goals can be achieved in the future. We all know people who walk around with a rain cloud over their heads and are always expecting the worst. Hope is the opposite reaction and is important because of its relation to optimism and looking to the future with expectations of success.

There are several reasons for trying to become more hopeful. Hopeful people have more positive emotions, and not only expect to be better off in the future, but also expect to be better prepared if there are difficulties. This is due to the likelihood that hopeful people are more flexible thinkers and probably have a number of ways they could reach their goals. Further, hopeful people are often buoyed by the support from friends who are drawn to their positive, upbeat nature (Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2002).

There are two components of hope: *agency* and *pathways* (Snyder, 2002). **Agency** is the person's judgment and belief that a goal can be achieved. **Pathways** refers to the belief that one has the skills to develop and execute the plans that will result in achieving the desired goal. *Pathways* also refers to having several alternative plans and methods for accomplishing the goal. When a person's *agency* and *pathways* are congruent and aligned, Snyder (2002) calls this "waypower." Developing these skills can enhance positive outcomes.

RESILIENCE Why is it that some people can grow up in extreme poverty, survive living in war-torn countries, or live through natural disasters and other terrible experiences and still come out relatively stable? Psychologists have developed the construct of **resilience** to describe such people. Resilient people not only seem to be able to cope with negative experiences and still maintain mental health, but some even manage to be stronger after they recover (Masten and Reed, 2002). Resilience is a combination of

(1) personal characteristics—thoughts, behaviors, and actions—that can be learned, and (2) outside resources that are available—supportive relationships and tangible resources (APA, 2011; Zautra, Hall, and Murray, 2010). Resilience occurs when there are cumulative **protective factors** such as the following (APA, 2011; Leadbeater, Dodgen, and Solarz, 2005):

- Having caring, supportive relationships within and outside the family
- Having supportive schools, communities, and social policies
- Individual capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
- A positive view of oneself and confidence in one's strengths and abilities
- Individual skill in communication and problem solving
- Individual capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses

In thinking about how to develop resilience, it might be useful to think about someone you know who has lived through very difficult times and later recalled the event as being the *best thing that ever happened* to them. Over the years I have often heard stories from students and clients about the transformation from thinking about an event as terrible and traumatic to thinking of it as something that helped them grow and improved their lives. For example, many of my older students are going back to school after a divorce that followed years of being married. Getting divorced was difficult, disruptive, and emotionally impactful for them. But, they often report that if it hadn't happened, they wouldn't be on the path to a much better life.

This outcome is supported by studies of **post-traumatic growth**. Post-traumatic growth refers to an enhanced personal strength, a realization of what is really important, and increased appreciation for family and friends following a traumatic event. Studies of this kind of personal growth provide empirical evidence that suffering can sometimes lead to positive insights (Lechner, Tennen, and Affleck, 2009).

The American Psychological Association (APA) provides the following suggestions for building resilience (APA, 2011):

- **Make connections:** Develop good relationships with family members and friends. Accept help and support. Become active in organizations. Help others.
- **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems:** Change how you interpret the negative event. Reframe what happened from a disaster to an opportunity for growth. Look to the future.
- **Accept that change is a part of living:** Accept the circumstances that can't be changed, as well as the changes that are inevitable.

Six Core Virtues

From their survey of a wide range of cultures and religions, researchers identified six core virtues (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman, 2005): courage, justice, humanity (compassion), temperance, wisdom, and transcendence.

What makes these virtues? The authors of this study speculate that their universality suggests that they are evolutionarily based because each allows a crucial problem to be solved: It may be that each virtue counteracts a tendency that could threaten the survival of individuals and cultures. Also, the key virtues identify six ways in which people try to make themselves better. Some people succeed at this kind of self-development better than others, and perhaps nobody ever quite manages to achieve all six virtues perfectly, but they represent worthy goals.

- **Move toward your goals:** Accomplish something, even if it's small, that enables you to progress toward a goal.
- **Take decisive action:** Take action rather than succumbing to defeat.
- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery:** Notice growth in relationships, increased appreciation for the little things in life, and ability to cope.
- **Nurture a positive view of yourself:** Develop confidence in your ability to solve problems.
- **Keep things in perspective:** Consider the stressful event in the broader context of life.
- **Maintain a hopeful outlook:** Good things can still happen in your life. Visualize what you want rather than worrying about what you fear.
- **Take care of yourself:** Exercise, eat well, and participate in activities you enjoy.
- **Do other things you think would be useful:** Write about it, meditate, or find spirituality.

Positive Institutions

The third defining area of positive psychology deals with how to make organizations—places of work, schools, hospitals, and other institutions—that will encourage civic virtues, support people in being good citizens, and help people become satisfied, tolerant, altruistic, and responsible.

An example in business is **Positive Organizational Behavior (POB)**. As with positive psychology, POB focuses on how to build on and develop workers' strengths rather than how to fix weaknesses (So, 2009; Giachetti and So, 2003; Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship, accessed May 2011). Positive psychologists are interested in the factors that make an organization a pleasant place to work and how to develop those human strengths and competencies that improve worker performance. POB considers how to develop in workers four key psychological strengths—self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience—that have been related elsewhere to success in

life (So, 2009; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). Examples of strategies that have been implemented in order to foster these characteristics are the following (So, 2009; Giachetti and So, 2003; Dutton, accessed May 2011):

- Encouraging employees closest to relevant processes to provide input on how to make these processes better; for example, asking assembly line workers how to more efficiently assemble the parts of a trash compactor.
- Allowing workers to make decisions; for example, allowing room service personnel to decide when guests should receive complimentary food baskets or allowing employees to craft the details of their job to better take advantage of their strengths.
- Flexible scheduling or on-site child-care that allows parents and others to take care of important family matters. This decreases worry on the part of workers so that they can attend to their jobs.
- More freedom in how to accomplish tasks.

There are related efforts being put into discovering what helps to improve the quality of relationships between co-workers (Nelson, Madden, and Cooper, 2002) and how to teach skills that develop resilience, positive emotion, engagement, and meaning to students in school (University of Pennsylvania, accessed May 2011; White, 2009; Seligman et al., 2009).

VALUES AND MEANING

Values Clarification

Values are those things that are important to you, your ideals, those qualities that are desirable as an end in themselves. Your values may be positive, as with cleanliness, freedom, honesty, or education, or they might be avoidance of negatives such as cruelty, crime, or blasphemy. Do you value possessions and financial achievement, or health and helping others? Whether you realize it or not, every time you make a choice to take a particular action in life, you are making a decision based on your values. Your priorities and personal values influence your everyday interactions and your relationships with others.

Three interrelated concepts might help to explain the impact that your value system has on your life. These are values, standards, and behavior. **Values** are the ultimate ideals and goals that people have for themselves, which are often shared by the greater community at large. **Standards** represent the attempts of people and groups to make rules that will ensure that values are preserved and expressed. **Behavior** represents the manner in which individuals interact with each other, frequently by conforming to the standards of society in order to preserve its values.

These general concepts may be easier to understand if you think back to information from previous chapters. Often, you were asked to notice your reactions and consider your opinions regarding the material. Some of what

was presented may have struck you as controversial or may have contradicted your beliefs. What you thought about, as well as what behavior you considered changing, was directly related to your value system and beliefs. Consider which concepts brought up strong reactions. More than likely, you will then be able to identify some of your personal values.

Why bother to clarify your values? Consider the following:

1. They influence daily behavior and are the justification for behavior: Humans are the only creatures that can reflect on their own existence. Not only do we behave in certain ways, but we *think* about the things we do. Values represent the ultimate reasons people have for acting as they do—their basic aims, objectives, aspirations, ideals. Values also have to do with the rationalization for behavior. They are how we justify and explain our actions. Because we tend to prize authenticity in our fellow humans, we often feel it is important that our values and behavior be in line with each other. Nothing turns us off faster than a **hypocrite** a person who verbally subscribes to a value but violates it in action.

2. Our personal values influence the way we perceive and label behavior, our own and others': Each of us has preconceived ideas about behavior. Consider the values involved in such controversies as the right to own guns versus handgun control, bans on sexually explicit books versus freedom of literary expression, the public's right to know versus an individual's right to privacy, and "freedom of choice" versus "right to life." Our personal values related to these questions influence how we perceive and label that behavior—our social categorization of others.

3. There has been a trend toward increasing concern for one's self and decreasing concern for others: Over the past three decades, college students have shown an increased concern for their own well-being and a decreased concern for the well-being of others, especially the disadvantaged. When asked what was a "very important" life goal, a far greater percentage answered that they were more strongly motivated to be *financially well off* and much less motivated to develop a *meaningful philosophy of life* than college students were 20 or 30 years ago. Fortunately, after years of maintaining that trend, some signs indicate that current students are shifting again toward a stronger interest in the welfare of society. One recent study reported that more students are showing an active interest in the problems of homelessness, child abuse, and poverty (Sax et al., 2003). Understanding the trends in what is valued in society can help you to think about and choose your own values mindfully.

4. Being clear on your values helps you set goals for your life: Clarifying your values will assist in life planning by helping you develop appropriate and consistent goals. A clear set of goals in life often makes decision

“This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

William Shakespeare

making much easier. Having a more coherent strategy for making decisions can in turn enable you to develop and enjoy greater meaning in life. Congruence in all these areas may free up energy to focus on your greater purpose in the world and consider what truly brings you satisfaction in life.

5. Examining the values that underpin society’s actions and institutions can help you make decisions about the influence you want to have in the world: Knowing your own values is a crucial part of learning about yourself. What sorts of things are really meaningful to you? What are you striving for and working toward? What sort of world do you want to see come into being? To the extent that we can’t answer these questions, we have failed to come to terms with ourselves. One definition of an immature person is one who still has a great deal to learn about himself or herself.

So, what do *you* value?

Life Goals

Having considered your values and what you believe is truly important in life, take a moment and think about what goals would most likely be a reflection of those values. What do you want to accomplish that would support, and be supported by, your beliefs? Many of us have high ideals about what kind of person we would like to be and what we would like to do with our lives, but fail to develop a specific plan of action that might realize those ideals. There is an old saying: “If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.” It is valuable to have a clear sense of where you want to go and what you want to accomplish so that you can make the right decisions about how to get there.

One method for developing clearer goals is to consider the process itself. How do you go about deciding what is an appropriate and realistic goal to pursue? Some people solve that problem by never setting any goals. “How can I fail if I never had any objectives in the first

“Values are the basis upon which people decide what they are for or against, or where they are going and why. In other words, they give direction to life.”

D. Campbell

place?” Often, this strategy backfires when they realize they can’t get what they want by just watching life happen. Many human potential seminars support the notion of making lists of things that you want to accomplish in life. Some suggest that successful people write down what they want and review the list frequently. What do you think would happen if you made a list of what you want to accomplish in the next 5, 10, and 20 years and read it daily?

As you begin to think about your goals, take a moment to review the material on goal-setting in the Introduction to this book. Recall that we talked about self-defeating behavior. Sometimes, we set too many goals, or create ones that are so difficult or complex it would be almost impossible *not* to fall short. This creates a built-in excuse for not trying something. Or, we set goals that are too low. Some people decide to do something only after there is an almost iron-clad clause that guarantees they can’t fail. Although they accomplish their objective of avoiding unpleasant feelings, the results of doing a “sure thing” are often disappointing. A goal, almost by definition, needs to be a challenge that will bring a sense of satisfaction when you reach it.

Review the information in the Introduction about how to set effective goals. Remember that successful goals:

- Must be your own, not what someone else thinks you should accomplish.
- Must be realistic and attainable.
- Don’t conflict with your value system.
- Can be written down, with specific interim steps.

Meaning and Purpose

It might be said that there are two main quests in life. The first quest is the pursuit of a means to live. The second is the pursuit of meaning to make life worth living. Victor Frankl (1946), a European psychiatrist, strongly believed that ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for. In Frankl’s estimation, the minimum standard essential for survival is a “what for” or a “whom for.”

Frankl dedicated his professional life to the study of meaning in life. He is widely known for his approach to therapy, **logotherapy**, (Viktor Frankl Institut, accessed May 2011). What distinguishes us as humans is our search for a purpose; the search for meaning in life is the primary motivational force. The lack of meaningful goals gives rise to undesirable behavior such as aggression, addiction, and depression. The goal of Logotherapy is to help clients remove the obstacles to being able to discover what has meaning for them.

Drawing on his experiences during World War II in the death camps at Auschwitz, Frankl asserts that prisoners who had a vision of some goal, purpose, or task in life had a much greater chance of surviving. Frankl was fond of quoting Nietzsche, who said, “He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*.” Consider how



such goals and purposes in life contribute to resilience, as presented earlier in this chapter.

THE PURSUIT OF MEANING There are a number of ways by which people establish meaning in their lives. Whatever the method, there is a connection between having a sense of meaning, being resilient, and having a general sense of well-being and satisfaction. The following are some of the ways people establish meaning in their lives (Arkoff, 1995):

- **Dedication to a cause:** Dedication to a cause can take us beyond personal concerns and allow us to identify with something larger than ourselves. The particular cause one dedicates oneself to may not matter significantly. It is the courage of one's convictions, not the content, that counts. Bertrand Russell stated, "Those whose interest in any such cause is genuine are provided with an occupation for their leisure hours and a complete antidote to the feeling that life is empty."
- **Creativity:** Many writers and artists have alluded to the importance of the creative process in establishing meaning in life. Even those fortunate enough to have acquired wealth and fame as a result of their work often say they will continue to create because it gives them a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Psychologists emphasize that the creative road to meaning is not limited to artists. A creative approach

*Look to this day,
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all
The realities and verities of existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendor of action,
The glory of power—
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day.*

—Sanskrit proverb

to cooking, studying, accounting, business, or gardening adds something valuable to life.

- **Service to others:** Some psychologists believe that a sense of meaninglessness can be attributed to the rise in individualism and a weakening of commitment to society or to the common good. Altruistic persons tend to be happier than those who are selfish. Helping others removes us from preoccupation with our own concerns, attenuates feelings of separateness or isolation, and gives us a sense of connection or belonging.
- **Religious or spiritual practice:** For many people, religious or spiritual pursuit makes life meaningful. Many turn to religion with new or renewed dedication when they find that their lives lack purpose, or when the purposes they have set for themselves are threatened.
- **Self-actualization:** Meaning can come from actualizing ourselves or fulfilling our potential, as described by Maslow. We find meaning by making the most of ourselves and becoming what we can be. When we fail to make full use of our abilities, we feel stagnant and discontented. We humans appear to be impelled to grow and enhance ourselves. During the times in our lives when we are becoming more competent at

Search for Meaning in Life

Our business in life is not to get ahead of other people but to get ahead of ourselves. To break our own record, to outstrip our yesterdays by todays, to bear our trials more beautifully than we ever dreamed we could, to whip that temper inside and out as we never whipped it before, to give as we have never given, to do our work with more force and a finer finish than ever—this is the true idea—to get ahead of ourselves.

Source: Author unknown.

“For the weak, it is impossible. For the fainthearted, it is unknown. For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal.”

Victor Hugo

something, feeling ourselves more fully, or becoming better persons, we seldom stop to ask about the meaning of life.

Values and Decision Making

Most major decisions involve value conflicts. For example, if you get the job you want, you may have to move to another town; career values may then conflict with family and friendship values. When you have a decision that involves two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you, the decision can be difficult to make. You can make these decisions more effectively if you have considered what your most important values are and the priority that you give to each. That is the purpose in exploring values and goals.

It is important to gather as much pertinent information as possible when making major decisions. Yet, one of the hardest things for most people to realize is that *all decisions are made on the basis of incomplete data*. There are very few circumstances in life for which you have all the information available at the exact time that you need to make the decision. Some people agonize over every little detail or obsess over the possibility that there is something that they have forgotten to consider. It can be reassuring to know that often in life you have to make decisions based on doing the best you can with what you know at the moment.

That said, let’s explore the actual procedure for making good decisions. Psychologists recommend that we proceed systematically through a number of steps. The acronym ACTION helps us to remember some of these important steps (Halloran and Benton, 1997):

A—Analyze the situation and gather information: To make sound decisions it is important to gather enough information to evaluate your options through both outside sources and personal experience. Consider the *necessary losses* as well as the potential benefits.

C—Consider the alternative solutions: Be open to all possibilities and remain flexible. Support and influence from family and friends can have a big effect on your decisions, especially significant ones that may affect the important people in your life.

T—Take action and select a solution after evaluating the possibilities.

I—Implement the solution and make a commitment to applying it.

Thought Question 11.1

What influence do your values and beliefs have on your future goals? What do you want to accomplish in the next five years? What plan do you have for moving toward those goals in the next year? What steps will you take this month? What are you going to do this week?

O—Ongoing evaluation: Encourage and accept feedback on your solution.

N—Need for change: After you have tried the solution, consider the need for modification.

It is often best to use a planned decision-making style, such as ACTION, when making important or complicated decisions. In other words, gather information and apply a systematic and deliberate approach that is a balance between logical reasoning and intuition. A planned approach takes time and energy but is worthwhile when you have to make important decisions. You will also be more confident with your decision if you know you have done your homework and it feels right intuitively.

Other decision-making styles can be used when you face time constraints, or when the decisions are not of great consequence. Sometimes it is easier or more comfortable to make a decision based on your emotions, to let other people influence you, or to leave the decision up to fate.

HAPPINESS, EXCITEMENT, AND JOY

Some psychologists refer to happiness as **subjective well-being (SWB)**, which includes a preponderance of positive feelings about one’s life. People with a high sense of well-being report pleasant rather than anxious, angry, or depressive moods. They also tend to be less self-focused, less hostile, and less vulnerable to disease (Duffy, Kirsh, and Atwater, 2011). As we’ve seen earlier in this chapter, positive emotions build up resources that can be drawn on later. In this section we’ll discuss things that I’ve found useful to help people be happier.

Write Down the Pros and Cons when Making a Decision

When deciding on a particular course of action, it helps to actually write down the pros (potential advantages) and cons (potential disadvantages) that would result. Draw a line down a piece of paper and label the two columns “pros” and “cons.” List everything you can think of. Put a star next to the most important considerations. There might be some outcomes that you’re not sure about. List these on a piece of paper labeled “?” Everything on the “?” page requires additional research. For example, if you are considering taking a job in a new city, the length of the commute might be a consideration, but you might be unsure exactly how long it

would be, so you don’t know whether to put it in the “pros” or “cons” column. Additional research might entail looking up information in the library or on the Internet, talking to others, or trying things out yourself. For example, when deciding on a new job in San Francisco, I actually travelled downtown from various locations during rush hour to determine the possible length of the commute. This ended up being a major consideration in turning down the job.

Remember that in few decisions will you be 100 percent certain. There is always a degree of uncertainty. Collect information, weigh it, and decide.

Doesn’t everyone know how to enjoy life? Who needs to learn how to be happy? We just do it, right? It would be nice if that were true, but it isn’t. Some people think that when things are going well in life, something must be wrong. For some people, being happy is outside their comfort zone. They may feel that they don’t deserve to be happy, that happiness only happens to other people. So, the first step in enjoying life is to examine your beliefs about how much happiness is available, what happens if you have it, and whether you deserve to get it. Many people believe that happiness is an unlimited commodity and although you can’t have it continuously, the fact that you feel happy doesn’t deprive anyone else of an opportunity for happiness. Some people act as if there is only so much joy to go around and you have to be careful not to exhaust the supply.

For example, I once knew a woman who thought she could only have three good days in a row before something bad happened, and I saw her make this belief come true. If life had been going smoothly for three days, she would make sure something bad happened on the fourth day. She was so sure that something was going to hit the fan that she took an extra big fan with her just to make sure it did. Then, when something did hit the fan, she would relax because then she knew for sure that she had three good days ahead.

What Causes Happiness?

Most of us have heard various sayings like “You can’t buy happiness,” and yet it would appear as though many of us don’t believe that. We have a consumer culture in this country, driven by mass media, that insists that everything in life will be better if you just buy one more product from the sponsor. Various sources tell you that if you just had a bigger house, newer car, the latest clothes, or a faster electronic device, then you will be happy. If this were true, why is it that there are so many examples of rich and famous people who are miserable and self-destructive?

There seems to be something paradoxical about searching for happiness from some external source. The more and harder you search for the one thing that will make you happy, the less you seem to have the experience of happiness, due to the very nature of the search. It gets to be exhausting as well as frustrating.

Many of the popular ideas about what makes people happy are wrong, according to several researchers (Myers, 1992; Myers and Diener, 1997; Diener and Seligman, 2004; Diener, Kesebir, and Tov, 2009). They found that peoples’ level of happiness didn’t vary by age, intelligence, gender, physical attractiveness, or economic status. In short, researchers have established that *external* circumstances have surprisingly little effect on psychological well-being.

So, if external factors aren’t important, how does one achieve happiness? It seems there are personal characteristics that increase a general sense of well-being (Myers and Diener, 1997; Seligman, 1998; Lucas and Diener, 2000; Diener and Seligman, 2002):

Self-esteem: Happy people like themselves, and they anticipate that others will like them, too. This tends to set up a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. Expecting to be liked makes it easier for others to respond in a positive manner. Also, some people have less anxiety and depression because they feel good about themselves. As long as their positive outlook is based on genuine achievement of realistic goals, that self-esteem is healthy.

Personal control: People who have a strong sense that they control their own lives are more likely to be happy. Those who have little control over their environment suffer greater stress and worse health. Effective time management is one method of gaining a sense of control. People who can’t plan their time and fill it purposefully are left feeling empty; those who are happy tend to be punctual and efficient. It is also important to take responsibility in pursuing activities that bring you pleasure (Hanna, Suggett, and Radtke, 2008). The singer Jimmy Buffet has been quoted as saying, “Life is better lived as a scavenger hunt rather than a surprise party.” The implication is that you stand a much better chance of being happy if you go after your dreams rather than sitting around waiting for someone or something to make you happy.

Sociability: People with sociable, outgoing personalities tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives. People who like socializing tend to be cheerful and high-spirited; their friendliness makes

it easier for them to find friends, mates, and jobs. The support they get from their large circle of friends then makes them even happier. The emphasis here is that it is important for most people to have social contacts, not that being introverted reduces the ability to be happy.

Optimism: Optimistic people are not only happier, they are also healthier. They suffer fewer illnesses and have stronger immune defenses. Those who think in positive terms get positive results. Psychologist Martin Seligman found that new Metropolitan Life salespeople with an optimistic outlook sold more policies and were half as likely to quit during their first year. Optimism does have a flip side, though. Unrealistic optimism can make people believe they are invulnerable and stop them from taking sensible steps to avoid danger. We need optimism to provide hope, but also a little pessimism to stay grounded in reality.

Experiencing Happiness

So, if *happiness is found along the way and not at the end of the journey*, how does one appreciate the little things in life and learn to stop and smell the roses? How does one go about developing the four inner traits that are related to happiness? Let's look at some ways that you can increase your happiness in life.

Stay in the present: One method is to remind yourself to stay in the present. All too often we miss moments of enjoyment in life because we are anticipating the next event and reliving the last one...for better or for worse. Many sources from the human potential movement of the 1970s used to recommend that people learn to *be here now*. If you find yourself ruminating about some past problem, bring yourself back to the present by consciously looking at and thinking about the present surroundings—be mindful.

Count your blessings for a week: Looking at the bright side and literally counting your blessings can be beneficial in boosting your own happiness. Make a list of all the good things that happened during the day. This can be just the little things like having lunch with a good friend or the big things like having your health. In a time when there are so many disaster areas in the world, it should be easy to be thankful for food, clothing, and shelter. At the end of the day write the reasons that those things are blessings in your life. People who did this were found to have higher levels of happiness and fewer depressive symptoms up to six months after they stopped keeping the list (Peterson, 2006).

Write a letter of gratitude: Many people say thank you when it is appropriate, but there may be someone in your life who deserves a special expression of gratitude. Write a personal letter—it can mean so much more when it is written—and tell the person explicitly what you appreciate that they have done for you. Your expression

“Happiness is easy. It is letting go of unhappiness that is hard. We are willing to give up everything but our misery.”

Hugh Prather

of gratitude may increase happiness for both of you (Seligman et al., 2005).

Share good news and personal stories: It is amazing how many people will give you an hour to talk if you want to complain about something. But, share what you are happy about, and some people get uncomfortable after five minutes. See if you can counter that by *really* listening and sharing in the joy of others. (Many people only wait for their turn to talk rather than giving the other person their full attention. Think about a time when you were happy and the person you shared with didn't have much of a response. Try to refrain from doing that with others.) Make an effort to share your joys with family and friends and give them the opportunity to enjoy the moment with you.

The Two-for-One Principle

A part of being happy has to do with the ability to experience excitement and joy in life when the opportunity presents itself. So, it is valuable to know how to increase those feelings whenever possible. One thing I've found effective I call the **“Two-for-One Principle.”**

First, divide potentially pleasant life events into two parts: the excitement that comes from anticipating an event as one part, and the pleasure of the actual event as another. Then assume, for the sake of argument, that half of life's potentially pleasant events happen and half of them do not.

People raised with the adage “Don't count your chickens before they hatch” seldom get excited in advance about possibly pleasant events. They may have heard this saying from someone who had the best intentions and thought only of protecting them from disappointment. Therefore, people with the Don't Count Your Chickens approach don't usually get excited at the prospect of an upcoming opportunity or event, ostensibly to avoid disappointment. If an anticipated event really doesn't happen, they experience zero units of happiness. If the potential event does happen, they may feel a unit of happiness. So, for every two events—one of which occurred and the other of which didn't—they get only one unit of happiness. (In actuality, people who don't allow themselves to feel excited over an anticipated event may actually keep themselves from being happy when something good does happen. They seem to diminish their enjoyment by anticipating that something is going to go wrong eventually.)

Contrast that line of thinking with people who **do** get excited in advance about a possible event. The *Go for the Gusto* approach is represented by people who are

always looking for the next big thing and approach life with the *Just Do It* attitude. As an example of the importance of joyful anticipation, consider the *big vacation*. Have you ever had a vacation for which the planning was the best part? Thank goodness for the three weeks spent in a euphoric daydream during the planning stage, because it rained every day of the actual vacation. There are many instances in life when the preparation for an event may be the best part.

With the *Go for the Gusto* approach, people get excited in advance, and then even when the event doesn't occur, they still get one unit of happiness. If the event *does* happen, they get a two-for-one: excitement at the possibility of the event and excitement when it actually happens. Hence the *Two-for-One Principle*. So for every two life events, one of which works out and the other doesn't, they get three units of happiness. Perhaps this helps to explain why some people seem to get three times as much enjoyment out of life as others.

The *Go for the Gusto* approach may seem unrealistic. Some may ask, "What about the disappointment when you count your chickens and they don't hatch? Doesn't that lead to *minus one* unit of happiness?" In fact, research indicates that people anticipate being far more disappointed than they actually are when bad things happen; in general, we are more resilient than we think (Meyvis, Ratner, and Levav, 2010). No one can control life by trying to avoid disappointment. Some things happen the way you want them to, and some don't. What *can* be controlled is the degree of disappointment felt when a hoped-for event doesn't take place. That is the secret of the *Go for the Gusto* approach: to get excited anticipating an event but not to get too disappointed if it doesn't happen. Even if you take away half of the *Go for the Gusto* units of happiness for disappointment over events that don't happen, you are still ahead of those using the *Don't Count Your Chickens* approach.

Here is an explanation for that: People using the *Don't Count Your Chickens* approach are so concerned with disappointment that even when they get what they want, they may not get too excited. They have practiced inhibiting their enjoyment for so long that they have trouble feeling enjoyment. It is wise to remember the saying, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth." Here is a gift for you, and it's free. Some people want to know what the catch is in a free gift, even when there isn't one. Because they give up half of their enjoyment by distrusting the gift, for every two hypothetical events they may experience only half a unit of happiness.

I once had a student who was very excited about attending an upcoming Rolling Stones concert and about the possibility that he might get a backstage pass. He was on cloud nine for weeks before the concert and listened to their music constantly. He wasn't just going to hear Mick Jagger; he *was* Mick Jagger—and he experienced a great deal of joy at the anticipation of the event as he danced and sang around campus. Unfortunately, he got

		Anticipated Event		Units of Happiness
		Doesn't Happen	Does Happen	
Emotional Experience	Don't Get Excited	0	1	= 1 (Don't Count Your Chickens)
	Do Get Excited	1	2	= 3 (Go for the Gusto)

so involved with the preconcert revelry that he missed the bus and the entire concert. When he returned to class after the weekend of the show and others learned of what happened, many fellow students thought that he must be terribly disappointed. His response, though, was, "Yeah, I was bummed at first. But, hey, I had the best three weeks of my life before the concert. And besides, next week the *Who* are coming to town!"

Which approach is preferable? The choice may be easier if you remember how the two groups handle life situations. The *Go for the Gusto* people **associate** with excitement and **dissociate** from disappointment. This effectively increases their enjoyment in life. The student just mentioned was fully present in the moment while experiencing the anticipated concert. But he detached and viewed the event as something from the past when it didn't work out. The *Chickens* people do the reverse; they view an anticipated event with detachment (dissociation) and then exaggerate the disappointment by reviewing it over and over (association).

Thought Question 11.2

What are your beliefs about happiness? Is there such a thing as too much happiness? Does your being happy deprive someone else? Is there only so much to go around? Do you have to do something to "deserve" happiness?

These ideas do not invalidate the importance of being cautious at times. The ramifications of a situation must be considered when making a decision that will have a lasting effect. But when all that is being risked is the degree of enjoyment to be derived from an event, I suggest you try the *Gusto* approach. You may be pleasantly surprised.

COMPONENTS OF CHANGE

Throughout various chapters in the book so far there have been suggestions offered for self-improvement or enhancement of personal adjustment. Given all the information so far, it should be relatively easy to come up with a change you'd like to make in some area of your life. In this section, specific guidelines are discussed for how to actually implement the behavioral change you have identified.

A Model for Change

James Prochaska and Carlo Diclemente (1995) developed a model of change that is based on the researchers' scientific investigation of change in humans. The model conceptualizes change as entailing a number of stages, each of which requires alterations in attitude in order to progress. The model depicts change as a cycle: People might require several trips through the stages to make lasting change. So, repeating the cycle is viewed as a normal part of the change process, as opposed to a failure. It simply means that change is difficult, and it is unreasonable to expect everyone to be able to modify a habit perfectly without any slips.

Prochaska and Diclemente propose six definite stages in behavior modification:

1. Precontemplation stage: Precontemplation occurs when the person can't see a problem, so he or she doesn't consider the need for a solution. People in this stage have no intention of changing their behavior and even deny having a problem, even though others may complain about it. They resist change and would rather have those around them change. An example is an alcoholic who would rather lose his job and family than stop drinking. Another example is when peers may encourage cheating or stealing, causing the person to believe that this is the correct way to behave.

2. Contemplation stage: People in the contemplation stage admit they have a problem and would like to change, but they aren't ready to make a commitment. They think about it but don't act. Giving a strong argument for the need to change can sometimes help move these people.

3. Preparation stage: People in the preparation stage are planning on taking action soon. They are determined and committed to action, but they still may need to convince themselves that taking action is the best for them. They may have already started changing their behavior with small steps, but they still need some careful planning before taking full action.

4. Action stage: In the action stage, people modify their behavior and their surroundings. This is the most visible stage and requires the most commitment of time and energy.

5. Maintenance stage: There is a struggle to maintain the gains made in the action stage to prevent lapses. Maintenance is a long and ongoing process, and there is a fight not to give in to temptation to go back to the old ways.

6. Termination stage: The behavior is completely changed and the person has confidence that he or she is not threatened by temptation. In such a situation, a person may no longer crave cigarettes or have uncontrollable anger fits.

Formula for Change

This is all well and good. It provides *information* that is useful in thinking about what to do to make changes in your life. But if just the information alone did the trick, there would probably be fewer counselors and therapists. Even with the appropriate information, along with suggestions on how to implement it, many people find it difficult to accomplish their goals for behavioral change. What is needed, perhaps, is the next level of instruction on how to use or implement the guidelines themselves: How to motivate yourself, how to develop a plan of action, and how to eliminate self-defeating behavior.

I have developed the following formula which should be helpful in accomplishing your objectives. Let's take that formula step by step.

GOAL (A) What do you want? The first step in accomplishing a change is to clarify what you want and set a goal to help you get it. You can begin to set a goal by considering the following questions:

1. Is there something you do that you wish you didn't do? What do you need to start doing to stop that behavior?
2. Stated more positively, is there something that you wish you knew how to do? What do you need to start doing to be able to learn that behavior?

Goal		Resources		Motivation		Objections		Self-Defeating Behavior		Positive Intention		Purpose
[A	+	B	+	C]	-	[D	+	E]	+	F	+	G = Change
What you want		What it takes		What drives you		Fear of attaining goal		Payoff for sidetracking		Provide safety		Provide reason

Thought Question 11.3

Formula for Change, Part A: What would you like to start doing? What would you like to stop doing? Or, what would you need to start doing to stop a particular behavior? What is your goal for making a change in behavior?

This may sound rather simplistic, but often people underestimate the subtleties of identifying the real goal to work toward. For example, I once had a client who said he wanted to stop smoking. On further exploration of the problem, it became apparent that the real problem was that he was lonely. The only way he knew of making friends was to hang out with the group of people who smoked outside the building at work. It was a risk-free setting where the only requirement for being accepted into the group was to have a cigarette. Once his real goals were addressed—increasing self-esteem, developing social skills, becoming more assertive, and developing interests and hobbies—he began to make more friends and was no longer lonely. He no longer needed smoking to have social contacts and so, subsequently, he stopped smoking with minimal effort.

So, although his initial goal was to stop smoking, smoking was serving a purpose. It was important to identify the underlying problems and issues in order to find the *right* goals.

The goal must also be something that can be maintained by the person desiring the change. It is not an appropriate goal to get your ex-spouse to be different. Rather, it might be very useful—with past or present spouses—to have a goal of maintaining emotional control, being patient and forgiving, or not getting into useless arguments. Those are all behaviors that you have some control over.

Most goals that are appropriate for change are specific behaviors that can be observed or measured to some degree. It is better to have a specific behavior in mind than to try to change a general state of being. For instance, it is better to think of an action that can be taken, one that will increase the likelihood of our being happier, than to just have a general goal of enjoying life more.

The goal needs to be realistic and established at an attainable level. As described before, some people set themselves up for failure by deciding they want to be a brain surgeon when they have just returned to college after 10 years away from school. Other people set goals so low that accomplishing them provides little satisfaction or real change.

RESOURCES (B) What does it take to get what you want? Developing the resources necessary for accomplishing the change you want to make means gathering information, developing support, and beginning to imagine how you would have to be different to accomplish the intended change. Most people have actually had some experience being the way they would like to be, but want to increase the frequency with which they behave in that desired manner. For example, the person who wants to control her temper has most likely had times when she behaved in an appropriate manner. The goal may be to remember to be that way more often. Other people need to have a particular skill that they may never have demonstrated, at least not to their knowledge. In that case, one might develop a resource by noticing the people who have that skill or ability. It is even useful at times to draw on any and all models for a particular behavior—alive, dead, or imaginary.

MOTIVATION (C) What drives you? In other words, what does it take to get yourself to do what is needed in order to get what you want? Why is it that sometimes you can get yourself to use the resources you know you have and other times you can't? Many people report that they know what they want, know what it takes to get it, and even have experiences of being self-motivated enough to take action—about half the time.

Thought Question 11.4

Formula for Change, Part B: What would it take to accomplish the goal for change that you wrote about in the previous response?

When working with people making changes, I often hear the question, “If I know what I want and how to get it, why do I still screw up so often? Why can’t I be the way I want all the time?” The answer often lies in the unexplored beliefs of the person—the unknown self—where there are objections to making a change.

Remember that *nobody does anything for nothing*. That means there is usually a reason for not doing something that you say you want to do, especially when you know what it takes and have even done the behavior before. There is usually a payoff for most behaviors, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that it is positive. The implication of the term *payoff* is that there is some side benefit, even for apparently negative behavior. Some people believe that messing up in some way may even prevent something worse from happening. In that way, messing up has the *payoff* of protection and safety, as seen in the smoking example above.

I often see examples of this type of behavior in the college setting. A student says that she wants to get good grades. Maybe she has a goal of getting an A in a certain class. The real goal, then, is doing the particular behaviors that would accomplish that goal, namely, studying and preparing for tests. Yet, the student reports frequently procrastinating at study time, skipping classes, and partying the night before an exam. The student may be receiving any number of payoffs for her behavior. Perhaps she can lower others’ expectations and relieve the pressure she puts on herself if she doesn’t get an A for the course. Maybe, depending on her beliefs, others will like her more if she doesn’t act like a bookworm. Some students even sabotage their own efforts, thinking that it will provide an excuse to drop out or get back at their parents for making them enroll in the first place.

People invest large amounts of money and spend countless hours in seminars, workshops, and counseling and still have difficulty making changes. They have the ABCs and still haven’t accomplished the desired results. Sometimes, the answer lies in their fears about the intended change in behavior. For some people, no amount of information is going to make a difference until they get rid of their *objections* to the change. The way to increase motivation often comes from exploring the part of you that doesn’t want to accomplish a task, as well as looking at the part that does want to do it. Therefore, let’s examine how to eliminate (subtract) the objections, and the resulting self-defeating behaviors, in the formula.

OBJECTIONS (D) What part of you doesn’t want to change? Most of us have some degree of reservation when it comes to accomplishing a goal that requires a level of personal change. If an intended change creates too much fear, we may express that by exhibiting self-defeating behaviors. We are never more creative than when trying to find ways to avoid what we expect will be unpleasant experiences. If you seem to be shooting yourself in the foot while trying to accomplish something that you want, perhaps it is time

Thought Question 11.5

Formula for Change, Part C: What do you do to motivate yourself to use the resources you have when making a change? How have you been successful in the past?

to look more closely at the underlying fear and determine what the payoff might be for the self-defeating behavior.

Think of a time when you made a change without much difficulty. When there really are no concerns or objections to making a change, don’t you just go ahead and do it? I have heard countless stories of people who reached a point when they were just tired and fed up with their old patterns and made significant changes without much fuss. We usually have to get rid of the objections first, though, to limit any further sabotage of the original goal. This may be more readily accomplished by attending to the concerns or fears rather than ignoring them.

Thought Question 11.6

Formula for Change, Part D: What are your fears, and resulting objections, about making the proposed change?

SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIOR (E) What is it that you don't have to do if you sabotage your efforts toward your goal? What is it that you are afraid would happen if you did reach your goal? These questions are useful in exploring what would need to change to accomplish the original goal (A) of behavioral change. I often hear in counseling sessions that people are afraid of change itself. Some think that, by sabotaging their efforts to change, they can maintain some aspect of their belief system and, therefore, maintain their comfort zone. People will go to incredible lengths, at times, to avoid challenging some perception about the world. Never underestimate the power of beliefs! The paradox is that there is usually a positive intention behind the payoff that comes from the self-defeating behavior. Many people feel that by not having to change, they are actually providing some degree of safety from whatever negative things might occur if they were to act differently.

For example, a woman came to counseling for help with losing weight. She said she knew what she wanted (*A—goal*), knew how to accomplish it (*B—resources*), and had done so many times in the past (*C—motivation*). Real change for her occurred only when she began to explore what part of her didn't want to lose weight (*D—objections*). As she thought about what would happen if she were to lose weight and attain her desired appearance, she got in touch with the part of herself that was afraid of having to date and deal with relationships with men. She stayed heavy and did other things to sabotage relationships (*E—self-defeating behavior*) to get the *payoff* of not having to deal with the perceived complications and resulting fears about dating, protecting herself from any rejection that might come after a relationship had started, and avoiding having to deal with sexuality. Her self-defeating behavior (weight gain) had the payoff of avoiding relationships and

sexuality. She did this with the positive intention, on a previously unconscious level, of providing a sense of comfort and safety. Incidentally, that whole cycle served to maintain her belief system about men, sex, relationships, and her position in the world.

POSITIVE INTENTION (F) While thinking about the objections and self-defeating behavior (D and E) that need to be subtracted from the process, consider what you might do to accomplish the positive intention of your self-defeating behavior. What you are doing usually doesn't work, and may even make things worse, but your behavior is often directed toward accomplishing a positive intention. You just need a better way to accomplish it. For example, the person who gets angry and keeps people at a distance may think that he is protecting himself from being rejected. Can you think of other ways to keep from being rejected besides being angry? Or, the person who does harm to herself by never speaking up or taking care of her own needs may believe that she is protecting herself from harm by someone else. Once again, can you think of other ways to keep from being harmed besides never speaking up? Finally, consider people involved in all forms of addictive behavior who are trying to relieve some type of pain. Can you think of other ways to deal with the pain besides drugs or alcohol?

The trick, then, is to develop alternatives that will accomplish the same positive intention as the behavior that may be creating difficulty and that needs to be replaced with a more useful behavior. When people have new choices that will work as well as, or better than, what they have been trying in the past, they are usually more inclined

Thought Question 11.7

Formula for Change, Part E: What self-defeating behaviors interfere with accomplishing your goal for change? What is the payoff for sabotaging the process?

Thought Question 11.8

Formula for Change, Part F: What are three new methods of fulfilling the positive intention of your objections and self-defeating behavior (D and E)? Imagine what you would look like, how you would sound, and how you would feel in each of the three choices. Make sure that each choice will work equally well, or better, at fulfilling the positive intention of the objections and self-defeating behavior (D and E).

Case Studies and Student Stories

John had been feeling depressed and had withdrawn and become numb to the world. He wanted to change that situation, and he came to counseling with the goal of feeling better. He stated that he had been under pressure at home and at work. As we began to explore his situation, John discovered that he knew what he wanted and had a goal (A) of being more engaged in life—his phrase for being happier and more connected and actively solving problems. He also had the resources and knew what it would take to move in the direction of his goal (B). There were times in his past when he had been in similar situations, and he had been able to do what was necessary to get motivated (C) and take action. Before he could change, though, he needed to explore his objections (D) to changing. In John’s case, part of him was afraid that if he started to deal with other people in the problem situations, he would be “sucked dry” and left depleted of what little energy he had.

Therefore, the self-defeating behavior (E) that he used was to become numb in an attempt to avoid any further drain on his energy. This behavior was an attempt at self-preservation and had

the payoff of having people leave him alone. The difficulty was that the strategy wasn’t really solving any of the problems and had the further disadvantage of leaving him drained. Once John became aware of that, he could begin exploring other means of accomplishing the positive intention (F) of protection that was behind the behavior of being numb. And, John had ample reason for wanting to change so that he could deal with people more effectively, and a purpose (G) for changing so that he could connect with his family and co-workers.

At that point, his original goal began to change. His new goal was to develop a means of providing protection for his limited energy supply, which included asking for what he needed in order to provide more energy in his life, setting limits on the time he was available to other people for problem solving, and giving himself permission not to act immediately on any given solution to a problem. He acknowledged that all of these choices were better than what he had been doing in the past. As he began to take care of himself in appropriate ways, he found that he had energy to solve many problems without having to withdraw.

to change. After identifying what the negative behavior was trying to accomplish, they are free to explore and develop alternative means of accomplishing the same ends.

Therefore, while subtracting the objections and self-defeating behavior (D and E) from the equation, it is important to keep the positive intention of those patterns. *The new choices necessary to accomplish the positive intention of negative behavior patterns become a goal to replace the original goal.*

PURPOSE (G) The last part of the formula for change emphasizes the importance of having a reason for making the effort to be different. Many people need a reason beyond the scope of their own needs to take on the challenge of changing some aspect of their lives. It may be useful to consider how others (family, friends, co-workers, or people in the community) would benefit from the change that you would like to make. But, keep in mind that if you are changing to win someone else’s approval, you may be undermining your efforts. Or if you are changing because some part of you has been hounding you about what you should do, you may be reactivating the objections to changing.

As a final example of the formula for change, consider the Case Study about John in the accompanying text box.

CONCLUSION This formula is fairly complex, but well worth understanding. It provides an opportunity to explore self-generated solutions to any number of situations that a person may want to change. It might be beneficial to read this section again, now that you have covered all the steps, this time with another specific change in mind. Plug in content for each step of the formula that is applicable to your life. Using a pertinent topic should facilitate greater understanding of how the steps progress.

Thought Question 11.9

Formula for Change, Part G: What is the big picture for your proposed change? What is the reason for changing, and how can that change give meaning to your life?

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is an important element in human relations because everyone experiences something negative in the course of a lifetime. We all have been hurt or unfairly treated at one time or another. Some people experience their feelings, deal with the situation, and then get on with life. Others who may have been truly victimized continue to make themselves victims by hanging on to the emotions, holding a grudge, or wanting revenge.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, whose work with the terminally ill was discussed in Chapter 10, stated in an interview

“The overall purpose of communication is—or should be—reconciliation.”

M. Scott Peck

that she wanted to be known as the “life and living lady,” and not the “death and dying lady” (Kubler-Ross, 1997): She wanted to bring death out of the closet to show people the way to live. She believes that it is only when you understand that time on earth is truly limited—and you have no way of knowing when your time is up—that you begin to live each day to the fullest. In her workshops on “Life, Death, and Transitions,” she deals with people who have been physically or emotionally wounded and who need to find a way through the pain. As a result of her work, she has learned a great deal about the power of forgiveness.

After World War II, Kübler-Ross was working for an organization called International Voluntary Service for Peace. While visiting a concentration camp in Poland that was transformed into a museum, she met a young Jewish girl named Golda, who had lost her entire family in the gas chambers. She learned that Golda, after being liberated from the concentration camp, had gone to work in a hospital in Germany to help children who were victims of the war. She had been bitter and wanted revenge when she was first released from the camp, but had then realized that, if she acted on those feelings, she would be no better than Hitler himself. Her work in the hospital was to purge her bitterness toward the German people by helping to heal the very people who had been her captors. This is what influenced Kübler-Ross to follow her life-long path of working with healing, forgiving, and learning to live life to the fullest.

Thought Question 11.10

Is there anyone whom you need to forgive? What issues do you need to resolve? What do you need to do to let go?

Letting Go

Most people harbor a hurtful memory—some injustice, some mistake that they vow they will not only never forget but also never allow to happen again. But to forgive doesn’t mean to give in; it means to let go. Forgiveness is really about letting go of the pain. It is a way of releasing the tie to the person who hurt you.

If forgiveness is so good, why do people carry around so much blame, anger, and resentment? One reason is that forgiveness feels like weakness or capitulation to some people. They think forgiving means that they were wrong and someone else was right. Yet, according to Robert Enright (2001), in his book *Forgiveness is a Choice*, forgiving actually helps you compensate for the powerlessness you felt when you were hurt or victimized.

Forgiveness Enables a Person to Stop Being a Prisoner of the Past

Do you want to stay depressed and resentful, or are you willing to take a stab at forgiveness and feel better? Forgiveness enables you to stop being a prisoner of the past. Therapists and spiritual leaders stress the importance of two things:

1. It doesn’t matter so much whether or not the person you’ve forgiven accepts it. The important thing is the fact that you did it; it’s your burden that you’re releasing.
2. Forgiving yourself is essential to becoming free of the past and truly forgiving others.

Here are some forgiveness methods:

1. Write a letter but don’t send it. Put it in a bottle and toss it out to sea or stick it in a balloon and release it to the sky.
2. Symbolically release your resentments on paper and ceremonially burn it (a New Year’s tradition with some people).
3. Write about it in your journal and read it to a trusted person.

4. Mentally direct good wishes toward the person who wronged you; pray for him or her. Substitute a negative thought about the person with a positive one.
5. Try affirmations, such as “I love you, I bless you, and I let you go.”
6. Deal with the issue, then drop it. Thinking and talking about grievances keeps them alive.
7. Make a list of all your resentments—against whom and for what. Then go through the list again, noting what you could have done differently in each situation (“I could have taken the dispute between me and my boss to a higher supervisor instead of just feeling mistreated”; “I could have asked my neighbors to pay for the damage instead of banning their children from my yard”).

Jann Mitchell

*“It is a law of human life, as certain as gravity:
to live fully we must learn to use things and love
people—not use people and love things.”*

Anonymous

Forgiveness isn't about letting the other person off the hook; it's about pulling the knife out of your own heart. Forgiveness often takes time because it is a journey through various stages. At first you experience anger, sadness, shame, or other negative feelings. Later, you begin to reframe the event or make sense of it by taking into account mitigating circumstances. Finally, rather than thinking of the person who hurt you as bad, you may begin to see that person as someone who was weak, sick, needy, or ignorant. What is important is that you let go of your anger and open your heart to understanding. Forgiveness is the reward that comes from the process of healing, so work to heal yourself rather than focusing on forgiving the other person. Experts offer the following suggestions to start healing:

- Forgive the person, not the deed.
- Don't think that forgiving is forgetting.
- Find ways to let out the bad feelings.
- Write a letter to the person who hurt you.
- Look forward in time.
- Enjoy your growing sense of strength and serenity.

CLOSURE

In this final section, it is appropriate to consider the themes that appear throughout this book. An emphasis has been placed on being more accepting of yourself because this will create inner peace and a sense of internal balance. People who have gained self-awareness and acceptance have a more balanced approach to life, and an increase in self-esteem provides a greater appreciation for individual differences and cultural diversity. I hope this book has given you an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of who you are and how you got that way.

Human behavior can seem complex at times, but the really important aspects of life we all share in common. We all want to be cared for and needed. We all want to find meaning and purpose in our lives and to be able to give something back to the world. Mentally healthy and well-adjusted people have a greater capacity for doing just that. The topics in this book are important to consider because they affect your everyday life and your relationships with others. They also provide an opportunity to assess your own behavior and consider what beneficial changes you might want to work on creating.

On another level, though, the content of this book is just a smoke screen. While you have been reading about and discussing the various aspects of human behavior, a more important process has been taking place. You have

What Is Success

*To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and
the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and
endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy
child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life has breathed easier because
you have lived;
This is to have succeeded.*

Source: Ralph Waldo Emerson

been communicating, relating, and connecting on a personal level. Hopefully, you have been sharing life stories and learning about how others experience life. In doing so, you have had the experience of seeing, hearing, and feeling the joys and hardships of your fellow travelers through this journey we call life. Consider how this book and your human relations course have affected the way you relate to others.

Now comes the real challenge: How do you deal with people outside the classroom who may have no idea what you have experienced? Even if the changes you have made are positive and in your best interests, there will probably be some people who are not excited or impressed. There is a greater degree of safety in a classroom, where everyone tacitly agrees to operate by slightly different rules for a short time each week. The real test begins now as you

Guide for Constructive Living

1. Before you say anything to anyone, ask yourself three things: (a) Is it true? (b) Is it kind? (c) Is it necessary?
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully.
3. Never miss the opportunity to compliment or to say something encouraging to someone.
4. Refuse to talk negatively about others; don't gossip and don't listen to gossip.
5. Have a forgiving view of people. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.
6. Keep an open mind; discuss, but don't argue. (It is possible to disagree without being disagreeable.)
7. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1000 before doing or saying anything that could make matters worse.
8. Let your virtues speak for themselves.
9. If someone criticizes you, see if there is any truth to what he or she is saying; if so, make changes. If there is no truth to the criticism, ignore it and live so that no one will believe the negative remark.
10. Cultivate your sense of humor; laughter is the shortest distance between two people.

Source: Unknown

continue to live your life the way you want to, in a world that may not appreciate, understand, or approve of your changes. That is the challenge and the opportunity.

To paraphrase an earlier quote: To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you be like someone else is a very difficult task. As you continue to take the risks involved in being true to yourself, you will undoubtedly be greeted with mixed reactions. Stay strong and centered, but also be respectful, and don't try to change everyone else because you have made changes. If there are ways in which you are starting to exercise new choices, keep in mind that, even though some people will be supportive, others may feel threatened. It is important to know how to stand up for your rights without imposing your beliefs on others. It is also important to be forewarned that personal change and growth may lead to conflict in some cases. If you truly change, others may have to change also. If one part of a system is changed, the whole system is affected. That may be the positive effect you have on others.

Rather than trying to explain to others about all of your experiences and the new information you have

gained, remember that just the fact that you behave differently will change the way others treat you.

Why the cautionary note about making positive changes in your behavior? Occasionally, I hear younger students in my human relations courses say that now they are going to go home and “fix” their parents, or older students say that they are going to “use it on their kids.” Some spouses want to go home and confront their partners with the changes that they think ought to be made—and now! Keep in mind that most people don't want to have something “done to them,” regardless of how beneficial it might be, and that no one can really change unless they decide to make the change themselves.

Part of developing good human relations skills is knowing how and when to present information to someone. The most valuable message in the world probably will not be heard or will be heard inaccurately if it is delivered in anger. Caring and openly expressing those emotions is a prerequisite for improving communications in most situations. I hope you have detected that this is one of the major themes throughout the book.

Big Ideas

The *big ideas* to take away from this chapter are the following:

- It is possible, and desirable, to use information about how people behave in a positive manner to enhance life, not just to fix problems.
- To be happier, associate with the happy feelings that come from pleasurable events, and dissociate from the disappointment that comes from negative events.
- To change, it's important to explore what it is that not changing is doing to protect you.
- To forgive doesn't mean to give in, it means to let go.

Chapter Review

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

There are a number of areas in which psychologists are exploring how to promote and support many of the ideas from the humanistic movement. Rather than just focusing on human weaknesses, problems, and disorders, many feel it is past time to investigate more about what constitutes positive aspects of adjustment. Positive psychology examines subjective experiences that support health and growth, individual traits and strengths, and various institutions that could help support what is best in humans.

VALUES AND MEANING

It is useful to clarify your values and become more aware of how they influence your behavior. Having a better understanding of your values will enable you to establish goals in life. Having clearer goals will, in turn, help you to make better decisions. When we have a sense, a purpose, and a meaning in life, we experience a greater degree of satisfaction in everyday living.

DECISION MAKING

One of the techniques for increasing life satisfaction is learning to make good decisions. Many people lack this skill. We often have to make a decision based on the best information at the time, and not making a decision is a decision. There are different types

of conflicts, depending on the circumstances. Few decisions are made with 100 percent certainty. This section provides methods for approaching decisions when 60 percent of you wants one thing, and 40 percent wants another.

HAPPINESS

People in general are about as happy today as they were 30 years ago. Happiness doesn't come from possessions or status. Rather happiness comes from inside: self-esteem, personal control, sociability, and optimism. The Two-for-One concept can help increase joy. We should consider all the implications of a decision, but too many people take the *Don't Count Your Chickens* approach. The *Go for the Gusto* approach increases joy by incorporating the excitement of anticipating an event.

COMPONENTS OF CHANGE

There is a great deal of information about making changes in life. Specific guidelines on how to use such self-help information are sometimes needed as well. It is often important to explore the part of you that doesn't want to change as well as the part that does. The formula for change addresses the various components that need to be clarified to accomplish behavior goals. It is often necessary to overcome objections to change while preserving the positive intention behind those objections.

A MODEL FOR CHANGE

There are steps to follow that can lead to a decision-making process that will facilitate making a change in your behavior. There can be a logical, rational, systematic manner in which to address the illogic of certain behavior patterns.

FORGIVENESS

We all experience unfortunate things and, at times, feel that people or the world have treated us unfairly. Holding grudges or hanging on to anger and resentment is debilitating. Learning to forgive and move on can free you to have a greater range of experiences in life. Hand in hand with that is allowing yourself to be more caring toward others in the world. Many psychologists talk about the importance of self-love as a means of being more loving

with the significant people in your life. Being more empathic, and being willing to express that, would contribute considerably to the alleviation of a vast number of problems in society.

CLOSURE

The theme of how to have more choice and balance in life runs throughout this book. As important as the content of the book is, the process of interacting with others about your reactions and what you have learned is more important. The real challenge comes as you incorporate the significant lessons and apply them in your everyday life. Many people will be supportive of your positive changes, but some may feel threatened. It is beneficial to remember that staying centered and being true to yourself will go a long way in influencing others.

Website Resources

Information on a healthy balance between optimism and pessimism
<http://www.youmeworks.com/optimisminterview.html>

Decision Making

http://www.mapnp.org/library/prsn_prd/decision.htm

Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship, University of Michigan

<http://www.bus.umich.edu/Positive/CPOS/Teaching/teaching-cases.html>

Resilience support

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

Resiliency Quiz

<http://www.resiliency.com/htm/whatisresiliency.htm>

Reaction and Response—What Do You Think?

CATEGORY 1: WHAT AND WHY

The following questions are intended to encourage introspective thought. This is an opportunity to respond to the material presented in the chapters, the lectures, the class activities, and the group discussions. Although the questions are the same for each chapter, your answers will vary greatly according to the content of the chapter.

1. What did you learn or rediscover and why is it important?
2. What are your reactions and opinions regarding the material?
3. Describe at least one construct in the chapter. Why is it a construct?

CATEGORY 2: WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

These questions will help you further evaluate and consider the personal application of the ideas and concepts presented in the chapter. Please share your own examples of how the ideas presented have influenced your life or write pertinent descriptions of how you plan to apply the information in everyday situations. The following specific questions are provided as examples of how to use the chapter information in a creative and useful manner. These are only guidelines, however, so feel free to include other information about your response to the chapter and class activities that are important to you. Use the *Journal Rubric* at the end of Chapter 1 to guide your responses.

1. What did you learn about your core values and beliefs? How do those ideas influence you regarding human relations?

2. Having thought about goals and decision making, what would you like to accomplish in the course of your lifetime? What are some important things that you would like to be able to say you have done?
3. What gives you meaning and purpose in life? When do you feel the most alive? How can you begin to express that sense of well-being with others around you?
4. How often do you have an optimistic outlook? What can you do when you feel pessimistic?
5. What do you think about getting excited in advance about an upcoming event? How much excitement is acceptable for you to experience, and do you have any fears about being too out-of-control? How will you use the Two-for-One Principle? What are the common elements of times and places where you have possibly sabotaged your own enjoyment?
6. After completing the *Formula for Change* section, what did you learn about how to deal with your resistance to change? How is the goal you say you want sometimes different from the one you really want? How is having a *bigger* purpose important for motivation in making a change?
7. Have you ever had a time when you needed forgiveness from someone else? What did you hope that the other person would think or do? How can that be useful in considering what you need to do to start forgiving someone *you* have hurt or wronged?
8. What are the important concepts that you have learned from this book? How are you going to use that information in your life? How have you increased “choice and balance” in your life? Has that helped to improve your human relations?

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GLOSSARY

abstinence-only To control unwanted pregnancy and STIs through abstinence from sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual contact.

active The belief that a person has an active role in shaping his or her development. Compare to *passive*.

active-behavioral strategy A coping response in which a person takes some type of action to improve his or her problem.

active-cognitive strategy A coping response in which a person actively thinks about a situation in an effort to adjust more effectively.

actor-observer discrepancy An attributional bias in which the person attributes his or her own behavior to external, situational causes than to internal characteristics.

acute A stressor that is usually short-term and has some ending point for its resolution.

adolescent identity According to James Marcia, the fifth stage of identity statuses in human development between the ages of 10 and 20, which is divided into two interactive processes, crisis and commitment.

adult child A person whose dysfunctional behavior is attributed to a negative situation in his or her childhood.

affirmation Statement that enhances or supports positive self-regard, often expressed with “I am” and stated in the present tense.

agency A person’s judgment and belief that a goal can be achieved.

aggressive behavior Achieving desired goals by hurting or disregarding others. Enhancing oneself at the expense of others.

AIDS Acronym for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

alarm A stage in the *general adaptation syndrome* marked by in which the body enters a temporary state of shock following stress and then rebounds, that is, countershock.

ambient stress Chronic conditions in the external environment that produce stress and place adaptive demands on people.

amygdala A group of brain structures involved in emotion, memory, and basic motivational drives such as hunger, thirst, and sex.

anger An intense emotional response to express displeasure internally or externally.

anorexia nervosa An eating disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat.

antianxiety drugs A family of drugs, such as Valium and Xanax, used in the biomedical treatment of tension, apprehension, and nervousness.

anticipatory A stressor that produces anxiety about future events.

antidepressants A family of drugs used in the biomedical treatment of depression and mood elevation.

antipsychotic drugs A family of drugs, such as Thorazine, Mellaril, and Haldol, used to reduce psychotic symptoms, such as mental confusion, hallucinations, and delusions, and in the biomedical treatment of schizophrenia.

antisocial personality A personality disorder that is characterized by a long history of maladaptive thoughts and behaviors that violate the rights of others as well as manipulate and use them.

approach-approach Internal conflict that involves having to choose between two desirable alternatives.

approach-avoidance Internal conflict that results when something that a person might do contains both positive and negative characteristics.

assertive behavior Standing up for one’s own rights without depriving others of theirs. Expressing views honestly and openly without hurting others.

assimilation Process or desire to not maintain one’s original cultural identity and not seek sustained contact with that culture.

associating Imaginatively putting oneself into a situation as if it were being experienced so as to experience the intensity of an emotion.

attachment style A construct developed to explain and describe the types of emotional bonds that develop between infants and their caregivers.

attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) A developmental disorder characterized by symptoms such as impulsiveness, distractibility, and difficulty sustaining attention for periods of time.

attitude A settled way of thinking or feeling about an object, person, or issue that fundamentally affects a person’s perception, social categorization, and attributions.

attractiveness bias An attribution bias in which a person subconsciously bases opinions about other people on other people’s physical appearance.

attribution An inference that a person draws from the causes of his or her own behavior, the behavior of others, or events.

authoritarian parents Parents who are very demanding and directive, but tend to be unresponsive.

authoritative parents Parents who are both demanding and responsive in supportive way; they keep track of their children’s behavior and expect a certain standard of behavior as well.

avoidance-avoidance Internal conflict resulting from having to choose between two undesirable alternatives.

avoidance strategy A negative coping response in which a person creates a new problem or makes the original one worse.

avoidant attachment style An attachment style in which the caregiver is distant or rejecting of the infant.

behavior The manner in which individuals interact with each other, frequently by conforming to the standards of society in order to preserve its values.

behavioral reaction As a component of an emotional response, the manner in which an emotion is expressed.

Big Five See *five-factor model*.

Bigger Hammer Theory How a problem lacks a solution by doing more of a thing that does not work (i.e., using a bigger hammer that fails just as much as a smaller one does), which should indicate instead that another tool is required.

biological In trait theory, an element of a person's personality influenced by biological factors such as genetics.

biopsychosocial A model of wellness comprised of biological, psychological, and social factors.

bipolar disorder A mood disorder in which a person experiences abnormally elevated energy levels, cognition, and mood with or without one or more depressive episodes.

blaming the victim When the victim is blamed for his or her misfortune because he or she did not take steps to avoid or prevent it.

blind self In the Johari window, that part of the self that others see but you do not.

body language Nonverbal communication expressed with the human body such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and the like.

borderline personality A personality disorder characterized mainly by unstable and impulsive behavior, relationships, self-image, and mood swings.

breadth of disclosure In the social penetration of self-disclosure, the range of people a person will share information with.

broaden-and-build model A model, developed by Barbara Fredrickson, in which positive emotions build up social, cognitive, and affective resources that lead to a broader range of actions and thus build more personal resources and positive feelings in an "upward spiral of health."

bulimia An eating disorder characterized by episodic binge eating associated with measures taken to prevent weight gain such as self-induced vomiting, the use of laxatives, dieting, or fasting.

bystander effect The unwillingness of bystanders to help in an emergency situation.

Captain-of-Your-Ship Theory In personal accountability, when a person misreads or makes a mistake in a social interaction and refuses to take responsibility for it.

chemical dependency The inability to control the use of a physical substance such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, even certain food, and not being able to quit and not being able to limit how much is used.

chief enabler In the context of family relationships, a child who desperately tries to smooth things out or to get everyone to go along and not make waves.

choleric An irritable and impulsive temperament; one of the four temperaments identified by Hippocrates.

chronic A stressor that is problematic and likely to have a long duration, with no apparent precise ending point.

civil union A legal term that implies that same-sex couples have certain legal rights recognized by government entities.

clan A group of families or households that traces its descent through the head of the house from a common ancestor.

codependent relationship A relationship in which one person has a problem and the partner has as much psychological investment in the problem as the person who actually has the problem.

cognitive appraisal theory In this theory of emotion, the person must first think about the response in order to develop or experience an emotion, that is, decide what it means before the emotion is felt.

cognitive dissonance An awareness that one is acting in a way that is contrary to his or her attitudes; when one holds two beliefs that contradict each other.

cognitive process As a component of an emotional response, how a person names the emotion he or she is having.

cognitive restructuring The process of identifying irrational, maladaptive, and negative thoughts and challenging their veracity using strategies such as positive self-talk, thought-stopping, and the like.

collectivism The idea that everyone contributes something to a pool of resources and then receives help from the pool when needed.

commitment According to James Marcia, the result of a reevaluation (*crisis*) by an adolescent in searching for his or her identity, which is the commitment to some new role, goal, or value. See *adolescent identity*; *crisis*.

commitment In Sternberg's triangle, the cognitive component of love—being dedicated to a long-term relationship and being willing to hang in there and make it work.

companionate A type of love a person feels for those with whom his or her life is deeply entwined.

conflict management A coping response to conflict in which a person uses various communication skills to manage and lessen the disagreement in order to explore possible solutions. This approach recognizes that conflict is a part of life and is not always negative if it increases understanding of another's position.

congruence (1) When words, nonverbal expression, and actions agree and overlap; (2) in self-appraisal analysis circle diagramming, the degree of overlap and similarity related to a positive self-concept.

constructive A type of guilt in which regret and remorse arise from actual wrongdoing.

constructive coping Coping responses and strategies that include confronting problems directly, self-involvement, self-appraisal, self-control, and the like.

consultant parents An effective type of authoritative parenting in which the child takes ownership of his or her problems in order to learn decision making skills to solve them.

consummate love In Sternberg's triangle, love that involves all three components of Sternberg's triangle of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment.

continuity The belief that life develops in an orderly, stable, and linear progression. Compare to *discontinuity*.

coping The active behavioral actions that a person takes to master, reduce, or tolerate situations caused by stress.

coping The process of managing difficult situations, working to solve personal problems, and learning to minimize, reduce, or tolerate stress.

crablike A figurative term for people in groups whose comfort zone does not allow them to feel good about or toward someone who leaves the group.

crisis According to James Marcia, the reexamination of old values and choices by an adolescent in searching for his or her identity. See *adolescent identity*; *commitment*.

cybersex Sexual gratification achieved through pornography disseminated via the Internet that includes photography, video, online chat rooms, and the like.

dance of intimacy An on-again-off-again cycle in a relationship that sees each person try to change the other in hopes of establishing the level of closeness necessary to feel safe.

date/acquaintance rape Forced or nonconsensual sexual intercourse between two people who know each other.

decoding Interpreting and attaching meaning to a message.

defense mechanism In psychoanalytic theory, the way a person rids oneself of unpleasant emotions that includes projection, displacement, repression, reaction formation, regression, intellectualization, and overcompensation.

Defense of Marriage Act A U.S. law that denied federal recognition of same-sex marriage and gave states the right not to recognize such marriages performed in other states.

deindividuation A process that allows a person to relinquish personal responsibility and give in to the social pressure and the group experience.

depressant A drug, such as tranquilizers, barbiturates, and alcohol, that reduces the function or activity of a specific part of the body or brain.

depression A state of low mood and aversion to activity, which affects a person's thoughts, behavior, feelings and physical well-being.

depth of disclosure In the social penetration of self-disclosure, the degree of intimacy that a person allows in sharing information with others.

destructive A type of guilt in which inordinate regret, remorse, and self-blame arise from a wrongdoing.

devil's advocate In the context of a human relations course, someone who advocates concepts that are not suitable to the study of human relations over those concepts that are suitable.

difficult A temperament in which the person has a hard time adjusting to changes, upsets easily, and whose emotions, both positive and negative, are intense.

diffusion In James Marcia's fifth stage of identity statuses in adolescent development, the state of having no clear idea of one's identity and making no attempt to find that identity. See *adolescent identity*.

dimensions of diversity Specific traits distinguishing one person or group from another, such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

dimensions of the self: public, private, and ideal Respectively, the person, or self, in public; in private, who might be different from the public self; and the idealized self that a person would like to be, which might be at odds with the public and private selves.

discontinuity The belief that life develops rapidly or slowly in a series of stages with abrupt changes and plateaus and even reversals in its development. Compare to *continuity*.

disgust A basic human emotion.

displacement A defense mechanism that involves diverting emotions (usually anger) from their original source to a substitute target.

dissociating A way of stepping outside oneself to view a situation from another perspective, that is, artificially created distance that offers a different experience and changes the feeling of the original situation.

divergent thinking The ability to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions including alternative and unconventional ideas and solutions.

diversity The condition of being diverse in such dimensions such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

diversity skills Those competencies, such as communication, teamwork, and self-evaluation, that allow people to interact with one another in a way that respects and values differences.

dominant culture The accepted norms of the group that comprises the majority of people of a particular race or ethnic group.

double bind A no-win situation in which any response results in pain or confusion.

double standard Attitude or belief that is not equitably applied; what is permissible for one person is not for another.

dream analysis In psychotherapy, a means of exploring the unconscious by interpreting the dreams of the client.

drill sergeant parents Parents who are ineffective and whose parenting style is at the extreme of being authoritarian.

dysfunctional Displaying behaviors that seriously interfere with one's ability to maintain one's well-being.

easy A temperament in which the person is seldom upset, whose reactions are mild, is easy to get along with, and adapts quickly to new situations.

eclectic The belief that both *nature* and *nurture* interact in influencing and producing human development.

eclectic In the context of psychotherapy, the combination of therapeutic approaches and styles based on the needs or problems of the client.

ego In psychoanalytic theory, a personality structure that is tuned into reality and responsive to society's demands and getting things done.

egoism In the context of altruism and prosocial behavior, doing something beneficial for others in the hope of receiving something in return.

Elephant-in-the-Bottle Syndrome When a person is in the victim role and presents an accretion of negative events into the smaller area that constitutes being a real victim, that is, like trying to put an elephant in a bottle.

emotion A powerful feeling that can be either positive or negative and capable of producing physiological change.

emotion-focused coping A form of coping that is oriented toward managing the emotional distress caused by a problem through expressing feelings, seeking positive support from friends, using meditation and relaxation techniques, and being involved in physical exercise.

emotional intelligence An understanding of one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others, and the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living.

emotional self The feelings a person has, or allows oneself to have, and how he or she expresses those feelings and/or controls one's emotions when it is appropriate.

encoding Putting thoughts into words and producing a message.

ending A transitional phase in a life passage marked by a significant end or loss event in a person's life.

ethnicity The consciousness of a cultural heritage shared with other people.

ethnocentrism A way of thinking and acting that assumes one is naturally superior to any other.

exhaustion A stage in the *general adaptation syndrome* in which the resistance stage fails and moves into a state of exhaustion and vulnerability to disease.

explicit attitude A belief or opinion that a person holds consciously and can report to others. See *attitude*.

explicit stereotype A set of beliefs about a group of people stereotype to which a person consciously adheres and can describe.

extended families A person's siblings and their children (i.e., nieces and nephews), parents, grandparents, and other relatives, as well as long-time friends, informal adoptions, visiting relatives, and the like.

external attribution A cause of behavior attributed to situational demands and environmental constraints (also called *situational attribution*).

external balance In a relationship where opposites attract (a "brick-and-balloon" combination), a situation when the more rigid or heavy one partner becomes, the more the other partner tries to balance things by lightening them up.

external locus of control A *locus of control* in which an individual believes that some outside force such as fate, destiny, other people, or random circumstances controls life events.

extraversion In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who focus on the outer world of people and the external environment. Compare to *introversion*.

fear A basic human emotion.

fear Emotional discomfort over the possibility of rejection or conflict; of saying the wrong thing; looking foolish; and the like.

FEAR An acronym for False Expectations Appearing Real based on the word *fear*.

feelings In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who make decisions based on values, not necessarily emotions. Compare to *thinking*.

filter A belief that can cause distortion (i.e., misunderstanding) in the message a person receives when listening to another person.

first-day morgue syndrome A suppressed, desensitized response to a new or unusual situation denoted by extreme quiet and inaction in human relations.

five-factor model The five higher-order traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience.

food pyramid A triangular or pyramid-shaped nutrition guide divided to show the recommended intake for each food group.

free association In psychotherapy, a means of exploring the unconscious in which the client is invited to relate whatever comes to mind without self-censorship, which encourages an atmosphere of nonjudgmental curiosity and acceptance.

friend A person one knows, likes, and trusts.

fundamental attribution error The tendency to overestimate the importance of a person's internal traits and underestimate the importance of external situations.

gender The roles, behaviors, and attitudes expected of persons based on biological sex; also, the cultural differences that distinguish males from females.

general adaptation syndrome (GAS) A response to stress that consists of three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.

glad A basic human emotion.

group polarization effect A phenomenon in which an individual's beliefs and reactions become more extreme through working in the group than they would be if the person thought through the issue by themselves.

group think An excessive concern for reaching consensus in a group such that information contrary to a decision is withheld; when group members' opinions become so uniform that dissent becomes impossible.

guilt A feeling of responsibility for negative circumstances that have befallen yourself or others.

hallucinogen A drug, such as LSD (acid), PCP (Angel Dust), peyote, and psilocybin mushrooms, that creates changes in perceptions, thoughts, or mood.

halo effect An attribution bias in which a person is seen in a positive light based on his or her behavior in another situation.

hardiness A disposition that is marked by commitment, challenge, and control.

Healthy Eating Pyramid A food pyramid recommended by the Harvard School of Public Health.

healthy voice An interior voice to counter the negative thinking of a person's inner critic.

helicopter parents Parents who are ineffective and whose parenting style is at the extreme of being indulgent.

hidden self In the Johari window, that part of self that represents all of the information about yourself that you know but keep hidden from others.

hierarchy of needs According to Abraham Maslow, the stages of growth in a human being, usually represented as a pyramid, that must be satisfied first for the other to be realized that begin with basic physiological needs (food, water, air, sleep, sex, etc.), safety and security, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. Maslow later revised the hierarchy of needs to include a new final stage, self-transcendence, after self-actualization.

homophobia An irrational fear of homosexuality in others, fear of homosexual feelings within oneself, or self-loathing because of one's homosexuality.

homosexual A sexual orientation directed toward members of the same sex that can include feelings of emotional attachment, romantic love, and self-definition.

humanistic A personality process of self-actualization or realization.

Humanistic theory A theory of psychology that emphasizes people's inherent goodness and their tendency to move toward higher levels of functioning.

hypocrite A person who subscribes to a value but violates it in action or words.

incongruence A term used in humanistic psychology to refer to the disparity between one's belief and one's actual experience.

id In psychoanalytic theory, a personality structure that is unconscious and seeks immediate gratification and the avoidance of pain.

ideal self How a person would like to be and the changes in oneself that he or she would like to make.

identity achievement In James Marcia's fifth stage of identity statuses in adolescent development, when an adolescent has developed well-defined personal values and self-concepts, having gone through a crisis and come out the other side with firm identity commitments. See *adolescent identity*.

identity foreclosure In James Marcia's fifth stage of identity statuses in adolescent development, when an adolescent blindly accepts the identity and values that are given to them by family and significant others. See *adolescent identity*.

identity moratorium In James Marcia's fifth stage of identity statuses in adolescent development, when an adolescent is engaged in an active "crisis" or search for identity. See *adolescent identity*.

implicit attitude A belief or opinion that a person holds but cannot or will not report to others. See *attitude*.

implicit stereotype An unconscious set of mental representations that guide a person's attitudes and behaviors.

incoming emotions In the ability to empathize, other people's feelings.

incongruence According to the psychologist Carl Rogers, that inconsistency or gap that exists between the real self and ideal self.

indulgent parents Parents who are higher in responsiveness than they are in demandingness and tend to be lenient, do not require mature behavior from their children, allow children to regulate themselves, and avoid confrontation with their children.

informational social influence A type of social influence that occurs when one has doubt or questions one's own judgment and looks to others for relevant information.

innate Characteristic, trait, or behavior that one is born with.

intellectualization As a defense mechanism, one that involves cutting off emotion from hurtful situations or separating incompatible attitudes in logic-tight compartments.

internal attribution A cause of behavior attributed to personal dispositions, traits, abilities, and feelings (also called *dispositional attribution*).

internal balance In a relationship of where opposites attract (a "brick-and-balloon" combination), when each partner has the choice of sometimes being a brick and sometimes being a balloon—being able to trade roles.

internal dialogue A conversation in which one prepares what one is going to say next in a conversation with another person and thus leads to misunderstanding. Compare to *internal noise*.

internal locus of control A *locus of control* in which an individual believes he or she has control over life events.

internal noise As a barrier in communication, the internal dialogue that a person engages in that acts as a filter and so prevents or influences the understanding of what another person says.

intimacy In Sternberg's triangle, the emotional aspect of love and includes sharing, knowledge of each other, communication, caring, and closeness.

introversion In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who tend to be more interested and comfortable when their work activity takes place quietly inside their minds. Compare to *extraversion*.

intuition In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who are good at seeing the big picture, new possibilities, and new ways of doing things. Compare to *sensing*.

James-Lange theory A theory of emotions that, contrary to a common sense approach to emotional response, states that bodily arousal does not necessarily follow a feeling such as fear.

Johari window A method of increasing self-awareness that explores four categories of the self: the open self, the blind self, the hidden self, and the unknown self.

judging In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who tend to live in a planned,

orderly way, wanting to regulate life and control it. Compare to *perceptive*.

just-world hypothesis The need to feel that the world is fair and that a person gets what he or she deserves.

law of diminishing returns From economics, how the emotional and psychological risk taken in exploring human relations can result in diminished benefits in what it reveals about behavior and motives and thus leads to the "diminished returns" of vulnerability and defensiveness.

Leaf-in-the-Wind Theory When a person is in the victim role and acts as if he or she has to go through life just being blown about by the winds of change and is not in control.

learned helplessness A construct in which several patterns of self-defeating behavior result from past experiences in which a person felt a lack of control during aversive situations.

limited perception Receiving and interpreting information in a selective way based on expectations in the actions of others or in the outcome of an event.

locus of control The extent to which an individual feels that what happens to him or her and what he or she achieves in life is due to his or her own abilities and actions. For some that focus is internal, and for others that focus is external.

logotherapy A therapeutic methodology developed by Victor Frankl in which a person searches for a purpose, goal, or task, and that search for meaning becomes the primary motivational force.

lost child In the context of family relationships, a child who hopes that by being good, withdrawing, and the like, their behavior will lessen the pain.

mad A basic human emotion.

maladaptive behavior Behavior that is ineffective or inappropriate and that impairs a person's ability to function in such areas as work, family, or getting along with others in society.

marker event An event in a person's life, especially for adults, marked by a change in his or her status and responsibilities.

mascot (or distractor) In the context of family relationships, a child who learns to be funny and entertaining, hoping he or she will prevent arguments and problems.

matrilineal In a clan, the line of descent traced from its female members.

medical model In the context of psychological disorders, the view that abnormal behavior is the result of physical problems and should be treated medically.

melancholic A moody and withdrawn temperament; one of the four temperaments identified by Hippocrates.

melting pot Figurative term for *assimilation* into American culture in which cultural differences are not preserved or acknowledged in any meaningful way.

mental illness A psychological disorder in which a person experiences abnormal thoughts and behavior.

mental self The cognitive abilities and capacities of a person for logic and reason.

middle child A child between the oldest and youngest in birth order who competes with them and assumes other roles, either positive or negative, to get attention in the family system.

mindfulness The state of consciously becoming more aware of the present moment: the situation that one is in, and what is happening around one. Compare to *mindlessness*.

mindlessness The state in which one does not pay true attention to what is going on around him or her and/or responding in an automatic or rehearsed manner. Compare to *mindfulness*.

minority influence The comparable power of an individual or a very few people as opposed to that of a larger group or social majority.

moderator variables (resiliency factors) Factors involved in coping effectively with stress, which include hardiness, social support, and optimism.

mood A feeling, similar to an emotion, that is more global, long-lasting, and pervasive.

MyPlate A nutrition guide recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that depicts a plate and cup divided into five food groups (grains, protein, vegetables, fruits, and dairy). The simplified pie chart design follows the examples of other countries in replacing outdated food pyramids.

narcissism An overinflated sense of self in which self-esteem is too high and unsupported by the facts.

narcissistic personality A personality disorder that is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance which, ironically, often is covering up a sense of inferiority.

nature The belief that biology, genetics, and inherited characteristics are the primary factors influencing human development. Compare to *nurture*.

necessary loss The realization that in order to benefit from a new phase of life, a person must let go of some aspect of the previous phase.

neutral zone A transitional phase in a life passage, marked by confusion and distress, that follows an ending event in a person's life. See *ending*; *new beginning*.

new beginning A transitional phase in the life process that follows a neutral zone in a person's life marked by entering a new phase of life. See *ending*; *neutral zone*.

new golden rule Caring that ensures that people receive what they want rather than what someone thinks they want.

nicotine substitute Pills, gum, skin patches, and inhalers that help a person who is trying to quit smoking.

nonverbal communication Message communicated by other than linguistic means.

normative social influence A type of social influence that draws on the desire for others' approval and a longing to be part of a group.

nurture The belief that parents, society, and the environment are the primary factors influencing human development. Compare to *nature*.

observational learning In social learning theory, the way children learn how to be assertive, dependable, confident, easygoing, and the like from role models.

oldest child The firstborn child who is most likely to be a protector of the family system and tends to be steady, dependable, and conscientious.

only children Children who have no siblings and are often expected to emulate the behavior of the adult world.

open self In the Johari window, that part of the self that represents all the information that you and other people know about you.

opposites attract A basis of attraction that combines two individuals who are very different yet appear to be complementary. Also called a "brick-and-balloon" combination.

optimism The general tendency to expect good outcomes.

outgoing emotions In the ability to empathize, the experience or expression of one's own feelings.

overcompensation A defense mechanism that involves covering up feelings of weakness by emphasizing some desirable characteristic or making up for frustration in one area by overgratification in another.

overcontrol The suppression of feelings to the extent that the suppression yields negative results.

paradigm A map or mental representation through which a person understands the world.

paradox A statement that seems contradictory or unbelievable but may actually be true.

paralanguage Nonlinguistic aspects of verbal communication, such as pitch and inflection, that carry additional information and meaning.

parental demandingness In parenting style, the type and number of demands parents put on their children.

parental responsiveness In parenting style, the type and amount of warmth and support parents give their children.

parenting style A set of behavioral constructs that influence child raising and its outcome.

passion In Sternberg's triangle, the motivational aspect of love and involves physiological arousal and a strong desire to be with the loved one.

passionate A type of love characterized by that "head-over-heels" romantic notion of what love is when a person is first attracted to someone.

passive The belief that a person is a passive recipient of various biological and environmental influences in the shaping of his or her development. Compare to *passive*.

passive behavior Avoiding or removing oneself from a conflictual situation; being unwilling or unable to stand up for one's needs.

pathway A skill to develop and execute plans that will result in achieving the desired goal.

perceptive In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who live in a flexible, spontaneous way. Compare to *judging*.

personality The way a person thinks, feels, and behaves that is unique to that person and how that person presents him- or herself to the world.

person perception A construct that attempts to describe the mental processes a person uses to form judgments and draw conclusions about others.

phlegmatic A calm and slow temperament; one of the four temperaments identified by Hippocrates.

physical dependence A state in which a drug user has to continue to take the drug in order to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

physical identity The degree of comfort a person has about his or her body, appearance, and athletic abilities.

physiological arousal A biological reaction of the nervous system, various glands and organs within the body, and activity in brain structures.

pluralism A process of *assimilation* in which cultural differences are acknowledged and preserved.

positive double bind As opposed to the no-win situation of the double bind, a situation a person avoids, yet knows it would be beneficial to be involved in.

positive individual trait A trait (e.g., hope, resilience) that marks a happier and healthier person.

Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) A methodology from positive psychology that focuses on organizations and how to build on and develop workers' strengths rather than how to fix weaknesses.

positive psychology The movement within the field of psychology that explores human strengths and focuses on how people can be successful and lead fuller lives.

positive subjective experiences The satisfying thoughts and feelings that people have that include positive emotions, being in a good mood, happy, in love, or having a sense of well-being.

post-traumatic growth The enhanced personal strength, appreciation for others, and realization of what is important following a traumatic event.

post-traumatic growth A positive aspect of stress that is only apparent in the aftermath of a difficult situation.

power victim A person who seeks self-gratification from the negative reactions that he or she causes in others.

prejudice An irrational and inflexible opinion formed on the basis of limited and insufficient knowledge.

prejudice A negative, learned attitude toward particular people or things.

prejudice plus power Prejudice exhibited by a person or persons in power, such as ageism, sexism, racism, and classism.

pressure to conform The expectations or demands placed on a person to conform to ideals and standards such as dress, behavior, and the like.

pressure to perform The expectations or demands placed on a person to perform a task.

primary emotion An initial and direct emotional response to an experience.

principlism The desire to engage in prosocial behavior out of principle.

private self How a person perceives his or her selfhood with all thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams.

problem-focused coping A form of coping that is oriented toward dealing directly with the source of a problem and remedying it by altering the situation, influencing the behavior of others, or changing one's attitudes, self-talk, and cognitive perceptions of the problem.

projection A defense mechanism that involves attributing one's own thoughts, feelings, and motives to another.

protective factors Support systems that facilitate resilience in a person, such as supportive relationships, institutions, individual capacity, and the like.

psychoanalytic theorist A theorist who understands a person's personality through the symbolic meaning of behavior and the deep inner workings of the mind.

psychodynamic In trait theory, an element of personality influenced by unconscious needs and conflicts.

psychological dependence A state in which a drug user is compelled to continue to use the drug because of intense emotional and mental craving for it. Compare to *physical dependence*.

psychotherapy The process of helping a client make changes in his or her life regarding attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

public self The different parts of a person's selfhood that he or she presents to the world, including the roles, images, and masks that one sometimes adopts.

race A category of people who are perceived as physically distinctive on the basis of certain traits, such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features.

rape Forced sexual intercourse involving both psychological coercion and physical force.

rapport talk Conversation to negotiate closeness and intimacy that establishes connections and maintains or promotes relationships.

rationalization Creating false but plausible excuses to justify unacceptable behavior.

reaction formation A defense mechanism that involves behaving in a way that is exactly the opposite of one's true feelings.

reciprocal altruism Carrying out an altruistic act with the expectation of being the recipient of altruism at some point in the future or because one has been helped by altruism in the past.

recovered memory In the context of sexual abuse, remembering a past experience as sexual abuse.

reference group A group with whom a person feels affiliated and from whom he or she gauges how to behave.

reframing When a person channels negative energy from anger and pain into constructive emotions and behaviors.

regression A defense mechanism that involves a reversion to immature patterns of behavior.

report talk Conversation that purely exchanges information and is used to establish position in a group.

repression A defense mechanism that involves keeping distressing thoughts and feelings buried in the unconscious.

resilience The ability to cope with negative experiences and still maintain mental health.

resistance A stage in the *general adaptation syndrome* marked by an all-out effort on the part of the body to combat stress.

resistant/ambivalent attachment style An attachment style in which a caregiver is inconsistent, unpredictable, sometimes responding sensitively and sometimes being distracted or rejecting to the infant.

Rohypnol A potent sedative and muscle relaxant drug that is hypnotic and amnesic; misused as a recreational and date-rape drug (also called roofies, R2, roofenol, and Roche).

sad A basic human emotion.

salad bowl Figurative term for *pluralism* in which *assimilation* allows for cultural differences to be acknowledged and preserved. Contrast with *melting pot*.

same-sex marriage A legal civil marriage between persons of the same sex recognized by government entities.

sanguine An optimistic and energetic temperament; one of the four temperaments identified by Hippocrates.

scapegoat In the context of family relationships, a child who thinks he or she serves as the lightning rod for family emotions and conflict and can diminish the problem.

Schachter-Singer two-factor theory A cognition-plus-feed-back theory in which emotion occurs when a particular label is applied to general physical arousal, that is, how one perceives an environment feeds back into the physiological arousal and influences what one feels.

secondary emotion A reflective emotional response that involves evaluation of the self and typically follows primary emotions.

secure attachment style An attachment style in which the caregiver responds in a sensitive way to an infant's needs.

selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) A family of antidepressant drugs that includes Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft.

self-actualization The inner motivation of a person to fulfill his or her potential as a human being.

self-care A productive form of behavior in which a person is aware of and takes care of his or her body.

self-concept The relatively stable set of perceptions that an individual has of himself or herself.

self-defeating behavior A behavior in which a person expresses a desire yet acts in ways that decrease the likelihood of achieving that desire.

self-efficacy A construct in which a person's responses to life challenges have a meaningful effect and lead to confidence about his or her ability to solve problems.

self-esteem How a person evaluates himself or herself based on perceptions about who he or she is, which is reflected in a belief about what is possible to accomplish in the world and in comparison to others.

self-fulfilling prophecy A negative form of cognitive restructuring in which a person sees his or her unchecked negative thinking as true.

self-handicapping A self-defeating behavior in which a person fears failure or the inability to sustain success and thus creates an impediment, or handicap, that makes success less likely.

self-serving bias An attribution bias that emerges when a person's self-esteem is threatened in which failure is attributed to external factors and success to one's own characteristics.

self-talk The internal dialogue that represents nonvocal thinking; stream of consciousness.

sensing In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who tend to accept and work with available facts and therefore are realistic and practical. Compare to *intuition*.

sex The biologically determined difference and function between males and females.

sexual abuse Whenever one person sexually dominates and exploits another whether by means of activity or suggestion.

sexual fluidity The variability in same-sex and other-sex attraction at various times and situations throughout the life span.

sexual harassment Intimidation, bullying, or coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors; considered a form of illegal employment discrimination in the United States and other countries.

sexually transmitted infections (STIs) An illness transmitted between humans by means of human sexual behavior.

shadow self Negative personal traits that a person avoids acknowledging.

shyness Feeling uncomfortable when meeting new people that also inhibits the ability to communicate with others.

slow-to-warm A temperament in which the person is mild in terms of emotions, but stands back and watches a situation before taking part.

social categorization A construct that describes the mental process of classifying people into groups on the basis of common characteristics. Compare to *person perception*.

social-cognitive In trait theory, an element of personality influenced by learning and the environment.

social-cognitive perspective A perspective that looks at how personality is formed by observing the actions of others, by observing the resulting effects of these actions, and by making decisions about how the world works.

social facilitation A phenomenon in which the presence of others enhances individual performance.

social identity The part of a person that interacts with others in the world and that determines his or her sense of belonging.

social learning theory The theory of how role models have a great impact on personality development.

social loafing A negative behavior in which a person is less likely to invest his or her full effort in a group task or activity than if he or she worked alone. Compare to *social striver*.

social striver An individual who works harder when his or her actions benefit the group than when such actions just benefit himself or herself.

Social support The various types of aid, care, and concern that people in a social network might provide.

spiritual self The part of a person that is internally defined and transcends the tangible world, and serves to connect one to the greater universe.

stable cause A casual attribution is one that is more or less permanent, such as a person's intelligence.

standard A rule, by a person or group, to ensure that a value is preserved and expressed.

Stanford Prison Experiment A study conducted by Philip Zimbardo in a mock prison in which volunteers played the roles of prisoners and guards.

stereotype A general belief about a group of people.

stereotype An unverified overgeneralization associated with a group of people or uniformly applied so as to obscure or belittle a person's or group's individuality and uniqueness.

stereotype threat The existence of negative stereotype that, when applied to a person, can be detrimental to them.

Sternberg's triangle A triangular model of love that has three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment.

stimulant A drug, such as caffeine, nicotine, amphetamine, and cocaine, that accelerates the function or activity of a specific part of the body or brain.

Stop at the Top A response to stress in which one is concerned enough to put forth his or her best effort while being aware that any more pressure will result in a decrease in abilities.

stress A reaction to any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one's well-being and thereby taxes one's ability to cope.

subjective feelings What a person is aware of and the name that person gives to the emotion he or she is having.

subjective well-being (SWB) A term used by psychologists to describe happiness, which includes a preponderance of positive feelings about one's life.

superego In psychoanalytic theory, a personality structure that is concerned with right and wrong.

superhero In the context of family relationships, a child hopes if he or she tries hard enough, is good enough, or takes care of everyone just right, everything will turn out okay.

superordinate goal A goal that is achieved by the contribution and cooperation of two or more people with individual goals that are in opposition to each other working together.

surprise A basic human emotion.

survivor In the context of sexual abuse, a person who experiences a process of physical and mental healing following the abuse (used in preference to *victim*).

systematic desensitization A method for controlling anxiety by learning to associate it with an incompatible response like relaxation.

temperament That aspect of personality that is innate. There are three basic forms of temperament: easy, slow-to-warm, and difficult.

thinking In Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment, a personality characteristic of persons who make decisions with a preference for seeking an objective standard of truth. Compare to *feelings*.

thought distortion A troubling belief or thought that contributes to negative feelings that make it difficult to develop positive self-esteem.

thought-stopping Self-talk spoken argumentatively to counteract negative self-talk.

tolerance effect The prolonged use of a drug such that it takes more of that drug to produce the same effect.

trait A single element of a person's personality; broad dispositions, that is, traits compose a personality.

transference In psychotherapy, the tendency of the client to project thoughts and feelings onto the therapist.

troubles talk Conversation about problems in which the intention is to make connection and share life experiences.

Two-for-One Principle A construct in which one intensifies the experience of potentially pleasant life events into two parts: (1) the excitement that comes from anticipating an event as one part, and (2) the pleasure of the actual event as another.

Type A behavior A personality type marked by (1) strong competitive orientation, (2) impatience and time urgency, and (3) anger and hostility.

Type B behavior A personality type marked by personality is marked by relatively relaxed, patient, and amicable behavior.

unconscious In psychoanalytic theory, the memories, knowledge, beliefs, feelings, urges, drives, and instincts of which a person is not aware.

undercontrol Poor impulse control in the expression of feelings. Compare to *overcontrol*.

unknown self In the Johari window, that part of you outside your conscious awareness that you don't know about, and, consequently, others don't know about either.

uninvolved parents Parents who are both unresponsive and non-demanding and whose parenting style does not provide consistent attention for children who suffer social and emotional problems as a result.

unstable cause A casual attribution that is unpredictable, for example, a person's mood, the weather, and the like.

value A construct that is important to a person, that is, an ideal or quality that is desirable as an end in itself.

victim See *survivor*.

victim role A form of self-limitation in which an individual's personality is conditioned by the way unfortunate things seem to happen to him or her.

win-win situation A cooperative approach to conflict resolution in which both parties win with a solution that is acceptable to all concerned.

Yerkes-Dodson law A level of stress that produces an optimal level of performance and, if the stress increases beyond that point, the performance level drops.

youngest child A child who is the youngest sibling whose personhood tends to benefit from birth order in the amount attention received.

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