Change and Maturity

Exploring the McFall Method of Changework

Daniel Burow

MASTER HYPNOTIST SOCIETY

Master Hypnotist Society Publishing © 2025

President of the Master Hypnotist Society

Daniel Burow

www.masterhypnotistsociety.com

Email: masterhypnotistsociety@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 05

Chapter 1 - Florida, little red balls, and how to start learning 13

Chapter 2 - Green Lumber 20

Chapter 3 - Talk, psychology & change 23

Chapter 4 - Skills, effectiveness and the big picture 38

Chapter 5 - Emulation, effectiveness and neurophysiology 51

Chapter 6 - States, mistakes & the bell curve 60

Chapter 7 - Science and Scientism 67

Chapter 8 - Important assumptions & the skills that follow 76

Chapter 9 - Maturity 89

Chapter 10 - Patterns: Failure to Success 94

Chapter 11 - Psychopaths, teachers and how to wear another person 108

Chapter 12 - Stress, Virginia Satir & trauma 114

Chapter 13 - Effective coping & secondary gain 131

Chapter 14 - Where skills start… it's emotional 140

Chapter 15 - Presuppositions of the work 148

Chapter 16 - Neurolinguistic Programming 151

Chapter 17 - The structure of change 156

Chapter 18 - It's all about outcomes 159

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 19 - Sensory intake and processing 163

Chapter 20 - Metaprograms & more about strategies 167

Chapter 21 - Big picture, values & beliefs 175

Chapter 22 - Beliefs - The Satir Model 181

Chapter 23 - Core needs 187

Chapter 24 - Perceived crime 191

Chapter 25 - Compulsion & more about secondary gain 194

Chapter 26 - The skills 202

Chapter 27 - Sensory Acuity 204

Chapter 28 - Rapport 212

Chapter 29 - Others Focus 221

Chapter 30 - Behavior Flexibility 226

Chapter 31 - Techniques 233

Chapter 32 - Hypnosis 239

Chapter 33 - Story 244

Chapter 34 - Change Physiology First 252

Chapter 35 - Who, when and where 264

Chapter 36 - Ethics 271

Chapter 37 - And another thing... or two 281

Introduction

It's a mess out there. Stress, anger, resentment, hostility, and outright violence are now features of everyday life. The economy is struggling, money is short for many, and every day that passes we appear to get better at hating each other for this or that. There have certainly been times in our history when we've been more stressed, and dysfunctional, but it's been a while.

You might even be inclined to tell yourself that this is as bad as it could possibly get, but based on what we're willing to do, and say to each other on any given day, it's hard to believe that. It's a mess out there, and there's every reason to believe it's going to get worse. In the middle of all this, there is a storyline coming at you that's trying to explain what's gone wrong.

The story line is a detailed explanation of a very problematic, and worsening mental health crisis. Regardless of the angle, the story suggests that we're stressed, isolated, and unhappy. That the last several years simply wore us down to a point that we're struggling to cope with the pressure of the lives we live, and the world we live in.

That we're losing our sense of meaning, and that many of us have simply given up, and checked out. The story suggests that depression, and anxiety are increasing steadily over time, and that aggression, and violence are not an if, but a when. And finally, we're told that the mental health field is overwhelmed, and there aren't enough professionals available to work with the people who need help.

At this point, I should tell you that I've been a C-suite executive with two of the largest for profit behavioral health providers in the United States. I've had direct responsibility for many hundreds of clinicians, working in multiple states, serving many thousands of patients each month.

All total, I've worked in the mental health field for more than 25 years, and I spent all of that time trying to find more efficient, and effective treatments for mental health issues. I've been lucky enough to work with some of the most creative people in the business. All of them devoted to getting effective services to the people who needed them.

For more than two decades this was my mission, and for the most part, I loved my work. Having said all this, I need to tell you the conclusion that I've at. I don't believe we're in the middle of a mental health crisis. I believe we're in the middle of something else. To find treatments, strategies, and programs that were useful and effective, I had to develop an particular ability.

I had to be able to quickly, and completely let go of ideas that a moment earlier I thought were true. I had to develop the ability to see past my education, my training, my assumptions, my effort, my fears, and even my hopes, and acknowledge what actually worked, and what didn't. And I had to do this regardless of what I thought, or how I felt about it.

Only by seeing reality as it was, not as I wanted it to be, could I arrive at something that would be useful and effective for other people. With this in mind, consider for a moment the possibility that what we believe to be a "mental health crisis" may, in fact, be something else.

We're taught, and told, that issues such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral disturbance are the product of a conglomeration of influences. Whether it's a chemical imbalance, negative thinking, lack of social support, or environmental stress, these issues interact in a way that results in the symptoms that we identify as a mental health disorder.

But I want to invite you to consider something new. I want you to consider the idea that the majority of what we call mental health disorders, as well as the "mental health crisis" all around us, are in reality the result of a pervasive lack of maturity. After spending more than two decades in the mental health field, I no longer believe that what we're experiencing is a "mental health crisis".

What we have instead is a crisis of maturity, brought on by changes in our culture, our society, and in ourselves. As human beings, it's hard for us to step away far enough to see ourselves changing. We tend to believe that we change very slowly, very little, or in many cases not at all.

But during the last 40 years or so, we've been engaged in an accelerating circular loop of cultural change, individual adaptation, more cultural change and more adaptation. The result of this loop has left us individually, and collectively less mature. As well as completely blind to what happened to us.

And now we're locked in, unable to find a useful way out. And worse... we don't seem to realize we're the problem.

At one time, our culture embodied, and then taught a whole assortment of learnings that each of us was expected to take in. Our culture used the institutions, groups, and systems that made it up to teach the lessons we needed to have as a member. Then it required us to come on board, or at least make a reasonable effort to join the group.

We could either surrender into this learning, and be inter-dependent with the group, or we had to stand outside the group and watch. I'm not suggesting that all these learnings were good/correct, rather that there was a core set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that were not just useful, but necessary to our ability to function in the reality that we share.

What these beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors moved us toward, and what our cultural group wanted from us, was maturity. You were required to surrender into, and accept the idea that you had to grow up, and become a mature member of the group. At 18 you were legally an adult, and you were expected to act like one.

You needed to take your place among the adults around you, regardless of your individual situation or circumstance. You were expected to tolerate frustration, cope with your anger, lose with dignity, refuse to tattle, carry our own weight, be dependable, acknowledge your mistakes, and take complete responsibility for yourself in the world.

You were also expected to surrender into the knowledge that nothing in the reality we share, is fair, just, or reasonable. These are the attitudes, and beliefs of a child.

A mature adult is required to surrender into all this, and more. Not only were you expected to accept all this, but your behavior had to reflect it. All day, every day. There was a clear, and present baseline of functioning that you were expected to meet. To be part of the intra-dependent group, there was a bare minimum of maturity required to work effectively with others, and make something useful out of you in the world.

There's nothing new about these ideas. If you're over the age of forty this is exactly what you were taught by your parents, schools, churches, civic groups, teachers, and coaches when you were young. These were the expectations set out for you, and you had to come to terms with them if you wanted to function usefully in the world.

You could refuse all this of course, but doing so meant that you would be outside the group, and that your ability to function usefully in the world would certainly be limited. It started small, but at some point around the turn of the century, we began to entertain the idea that we should not have to tolerate words, ideas, feelings or experiences that we don't wish to.

Any effort that requires you to tolerate an experience you feel to be negative, is a form of abuse or violence. Over time this idea grew in popularity until it became larger than any wisdom that opposed it. As a result, all subsequent generations have come into the world believing this is the way reality works.

They do not have to tolerate experience they don't wish to… and you can't make them. And just so we're clear.

Saying I don't have to, and you can't make me, is the definition of immaturity. Even more disturbing, is the realization that people over the age of 40 have started to embrace this idea as well. I guess it's understandable if you think about it.

The notion that you don't have to accept any experience you don't agree with, and that you don't have to take any responsibility for the impact your choices have on yourself, others, or the world, isn't a hard idea to sell. It will eventually sell itself. The reality is, that if you refuse to surrender into maturity you simply will not be able to usefully function in the world.

You are refusing to take feedback, learn, and change. You are saying that regardless of what happens, you are always right, and any feedback to the contrary, is a form of violence. This is a prescription for dysfunction and suffering.

With so many people refusing to mature, and validating the refusal of others, our culture has become a circular loop of suffering. It's this ongoing and expanding pattern of individual and collective suffering, that we've come to mistake for a mental health crisis. But to identify it as a mental health crisis, is to focus on the symptoms, and not the problem.

I want you to take a moment, and consider the idea that most of the suffering around you is the result of our profound lack of maturity. Individually, and collectively we are simply refusing to accept the lessons that reality is trying to teach us.

We are refusing to take responsibility for ourselves, and the impact our choices have on others and the world. We are hiding behind a conspiracy of people, all of whom have decided that they don't have to learn, and change, and you can't make them.

I'm want you to consider the idea that we've rejected a common-sense, reality-based wisdom that was once passed from parent to child, and generation to generation in favor of something easier. That it was this very wisdom that unified us, supported us, connected us, empowered us, and kept us from the disaster of thinking that we should be immune from the stress that comes from the requirement that we must learn and change if want to function usefully in the world.

When we rejected maturity, and opted for the safety of never having to be responsible for any part of our own lives… we got lost. And now, we're so completely lost that we don't even realize it. We do have a crisis on our hands, but addressing our mental health is missing the point entirely. The first step to changing anything is to see the problem, and admit it that it exists.

If we don't, and we continue to focus on the symptoms, our suffering will not only get worse, it will also become increasingly harder to change. We need to start right here with an effort to recognize and own the problem. Then we need to take a hard look at what's useful and what isn't. Some of the places we need to go may be difficult for us.

But as I pointed out a moment ago, if you want to find what works you're going to need to step away from what you already believe.

If you don’t, what you already believe will be the limits of what you can see. These limits will ensure that you will never see the problem, or take responsibility for it. The remainder of this book is a map you can use to discover the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that can move you toward maturity.

We will focus on the skills you need to see what’s useful, and then act on this every day. We will outline an approach to learning, and change, that’s based on what moves you toward success and happiness. The goal of all this, is to interrupt the circular loop of suffering, in a way that allows you to see something new.

01 Florida, little red balls, and how to start learning

I've been incredibly lucky during my life and lucky in a couple of really important ways. I've been blessed to meet, and learn from a long line of amazing teachers. Truly giving people who were each extraordinary in some way. And more importantly, in each case I've been able to apprentice myself to them for some length of time.

They allowed me to spend hour after hour, and day after day with them as they moved from work, to errands, to lunch, to casual conversations, and everything in between. I've apprenticed myself to artists, philosophers, medical physicians, traditional Chinese Taoist physicians, Christian mystics, Hindu Swami's, psychotherapists, salesmen, business operations managers, magicians, CEO's, performers, mentalists, entrepreneurs, con-men, criminals and hypnotists. I did all this because I was looking for something.

I am a psychologist, and I wanted to feel like I was effective at helping people change. And very simply, I didn't feel that way very often. My job was to help people cope with difficult experiences, and change their behavior. Much of the time however, I didn't feel like I was as effective as my patients needed me to be.

I was doing what I was supposed to do, but so often, when they really needed help, what I had to offer didn't seem to make a difference. One day, I simply decided that I was going to find the knowledge, methods, and techniques that would allow me to be as effective as I needed to be.

If you give someone enough time they'll either get smart, or they'll get lucky. Even a broken clock gets to be right twice a day. I have no idea which one of these was responsible when I met Scott McFall, but it was the most useful thing that's ever happened to me. Because it turns out he not only knew what I was looking for, and why I was looking for it. More importantly though... he knew why I wasn't finding it.

I may be a great student but I'm a slow learner. And with Scott I suspect I was the slowest learner her ever worked with. Remember, I had a doctorate in counseling psychology, and worked as a licensed psychologist when Scott and I first met. I thought I was really smart, and I thought I knew a lot about a lot of things.

When I met Scott the first time he took one look at me, and told me what I was looking for, and why I was looking for it. Then he told me, in no uncertain terms, why I would never find what I was looking for in my academic education, clinical training, and general self-improvement shopping spree.

He was kind but direct with me, and I didn't really know what to do or say, because a part of me feared he was right. When he told me that I would never find what I was looking for in academic science, clinical work, or all the other training I was doing, or had done I got confused, and then angry.

I walked away from him that day, and didn't speak to him for oh... about 10 years. For 10 years I continued to believe that I could find the answers I was looking for if I just kept searching, working, and studying. I really believed that I would find the information, or knowledge that would allow me to discover what I was looking for all on my own. After ten long years, that didn't happen.

During that time I moved into senior management, and then executive management for two of the largest for-profit mental health companies in the United States. I managed many hundreds of clinicians in multiple service lines, and generated millions of dollars in revenue. I learned from, and worked with some of the best executives and clinicians in the field.

My career was a success by any measure I might want to apply. All the while I continued to feel that the clinical work I was doing, and teaching wasn't as effective as it needed to be. I continued to feel like I was missing something important. Some idea, understanding, or piece of information that would make everything come together.

Throughout that time I continued the search for that particular teacher, method, or practice that would connect all the dots for me. As the years ticked by however, I started to acknowledge to myself that I wasn't going to find what I was looking for in books, research, workshops, and training.

I thought again about what Scott had said to me many years before. And I realized that I had to talk with him again.

After a phone call, and then several conversations he invited me to his office in Florida. So, I packed up my diplomas, years of education, years of clinical experience, business success, polished presentation, and a change of clothes, and got on a plane to Florida.

I'm going to shorten this story a bit for the sake of time, but I knocked on his door, and then spent the better part of two days listening to him tell me that I was afraid… and exactly what it was I was afraid of. He went on to tell me how everything I'd been doing to find what I thought I was missing had been wrong, and why it wasn't going to get me where I wanted to go.

You see, Scott told me that my problem… was me. He told me that I was entirely self-involved. That regardless of what I presented to him, I was actually a superior, aloof, smarty pants, and that this was the reason I couldn't find what I was looking for. The general idea being that I can't learn anything, when I already think I'm right about everything.

I took all this in, and gave him my best poker face. I was polite, and I told him he was right. All the while in my head I was questioning his motives, and deciding if I agreed with what he was saying. I was very busy trying to think my way out of the situation I found myself in.

And you know what, Scott knew this too, and he was kind enough to tell me exactly what I was doing in my head, and how this was all part of my self-focused, superior, smarty pants thing. It was a rough couple of days. At the end of the second day, I was exhausted and sad. I was sad because by that point, I was sure he was right. I knew it.

But for some reason, I couldn't put the smarty pants thing down and surrender into what he was saying. I couldn't stop trying to think my way into a place where I was smart enough to determine what I was missing, and fix it. I was so busy defending me, rationalizing my actions, and trying to feel smart, that I couldn't learn the skills that I was looking for.

Scott, who hadn't lightened up on me for even a moment, stopped what he was doing and grabbed a bag of small red balls. He didn't say a word as he walked over and sat beside me. He reached into the bag and took out a ball. He scooted close. He held an empty hand in front of me. In his other hand, he held a ball between his finger and thumb.

He put the ball in his empty hand, made a fist, opened his hand, picked up the ball, lifted it up to my eye level, and then did the same thing again. He went through this process about five or six times, a bit faster each time. Then he put the ball in his hand and made a fist. He looked me dead in the eye and asked, "Where's the ball?" "In your hand," I said. He opened his hand and there was nothing there.

I was immediately engaged. I looked at him and he just stared at me. He never flinched. Just looked at me like he was waiting for something. Then he said "let's do that again." We did it again. I watched him very carefully thinking I was going to figure out how he did this simple trick.

He went through that whole process again, finally placing the ball in his hand. And again, his hand opened… no ball. We did this about half a dozen times. Each time I thought, and looked, and considered, and anticipated, thinking I could figure this out.

Each time… same thing happened. No ball.

Finally, he held out his empty hand, leaned in close, and told me several important things that I needed to hear. The last thing he said to me was, “Until you surrender, and acknowledge that you don’t know something, you’ll never learn anything.”

I sat in my chair and looked out the window. Scott got up, said he would see me tomorrow at 9am and walked out of the room. I sat there for a few moments, and then got up to stretch and grab my bag. When I turned around, what do you know… on the floor behind me lie six little red balls.

In that moment I learned many things. I learned that I wasn’t as smart as I thought I was. I learned that all my education and experience didn’t make me smart. And I learned that if I wanted to find the answers to my questions, and develop a more effective set of skills, I had to surrender the belief that I was smart enough to know what I needed.

I had to surrender the idea that I could think ahead, figure out what I needed, and then do it without having to go through the learning process. Oh, and one last thing. Maybe I needed to focus on something other than me. This was the moment in my life where I actually started to learn.

Learning Points:

1. Some risks are worth it.
2. Being in a new experience doesn't necessarily mean you're at risk... sometimes you're safe
3. To discover something new, it's useful to be aware of the thoughts and feelings of others... but not what they think or feel about you specifically.
4. Learning is the result of surrendering into experience and taking the ride... with awareness of the world around you.

Questions:

1

In your life, is there an activity or interaction where you're focused on other people first?

2

How is this activity or interaction different from the rest of your life?

3

When aware of others, do you see the movie of how they got where they are? How they acquired their current skills and abilities?

Action Plans:

- Notice when you're focused on worry or anxiety and how this impacts your behavior.
- If you choose your mood based on the outcome you want, how is your mood different than if its dictated by your reactions to the present or the past?

02 Green Lumber

If you're interested in changing people, there's a book you have to read. It's called, What I Learned Losing a Million Dollars, (1994) by Brendan Moynihan and Jim Paul. Don't let the title fool you. This thing is absolutely packed with insights into how human beings learn and change.

The most important lesson the book offers involves the trading of something called "Green Lumber". The author, Jim Paul, worked with a man named Joe Siegel. Joe was a very successful trader of the commodity known as "Green Lumber." He knew the business inside and out.

He could trade green lumber today, see into the future, and tell you how it would trade tomorrow. Turns out there were an interesting fact about Joe. He thought "green lumber" was lumber that had been painted green. The author was amazed to discover after a casual conversation that Joe was a wizard at trading green lumber, and in reality he didn't know what green lumber was.

He excelled in the complexities of economics, markets, and technology related to commodities trading. He was responsible for extraordinary amounts of money, and the reputation of his firm. Yet he didn't really understand the very thing he was trading, why it sold, or how people used it. In spite of all this he was still incredibly successful at what he did. For the author, this moment was an epiphany. A sudden realization about what being effective at something actually entails.

In that moment he realized that education, theory, and knowledge are not sufficient to make you good at something. What makes you effective at trading green lumber, or any other activity no matter how technical, or complex is that virtually everything we do in life, is a learnable skill.

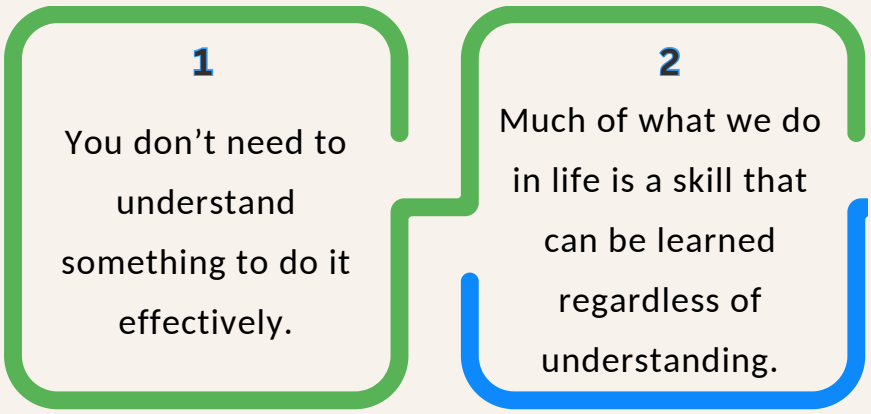
If you have a good teacher, get useful feedback, and practice obsessively, you can become effective, and successful at almost anything. And more importantly, you can become effective, and successful without advanced education, theoretical understanding, or even accurate knowledge regarding whatever you're doing.

Yes, there are exceptions to this idea. An example would be the hard sciences such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry. They require an understanding of theory, as well as a growing knowledge base to engage in useful work. You might also suggest medicine as an exception.

It's often seen as hard science largely because its foundations are built on biology and chemistry. So yes there are some exceptions, but they're damn few. And we should consider how much of the hard sciences, and medicine are actually learned skills. After the foundational education, much of hard science, and medicine is learned by doing it.

That's why all those interns, students, fellows, and residents are standing around all the time. They're learning by doing.

Learning Points:



Questions:

- Have you ever discovered that were good at something; you didn't really understand some part of it?
- Make a list of three experiences where you did well when you had to improvise. These examples can be small or large. Think about times when you felt great when you had to wing it. (Yes, we know this is an activity and it's in the question list.)

Action Plans:

- Make a list of activities or skills that you enjoy, but you suspect you don't understand them as well as you could.

03 Talk, psychology & change

They say talk is cheap... and little quips like this don't get to be quips for no reason. You know what this statement means. Every person over the age of ten knows that conversation with someone, no matter how meaningful, is not enough to get them to learn, change, and act.

What you know instead, from extensive experience, is that talking doesn't change much for most of us. You can talk to yourself, or someone else all day long, and most of the time nothing will change. If talking helped people change, we would know it WAS NOT cheap...and psychotherapy would be much more effective than it appears to be.

Psychotherapy, the human change process brought to you by psychology, is built primarily on structured conversation. It's about language, the use of language, and structured language activities that we're assured are the foundation of effective mental health treatment.

Psychotherapy is a language-based game of sorts in which you talk, the therapist listens to your story, diagnoses your problem, and then the two of you talk about what you should do, think, or feel to address whatever the two of you think your problem is.

This is the case in all forms of therapy with the exception of experiential approaches such as Gestalt, or EMDR.

There's a growing list of methods you can use to engage in this process, and these methods are called "theories of psychotherapy". They include psychodynamic, Jungian, Rogerian, Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy (CBT), as well as more recent approaches such as Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT).

Regardless of the method you choose you should realize that there is little other than the claims of the field of psychology, and the research it produces to suggest that any of this is effective at treating a given diagnosis. In other words, the field of psychology, and to a lesser extent medicine, suggest they have evidence that psychotherapy is a valid and effective treatment for mental health issues.

No other field, validates these claims. An interesting idea to consider at this moment is that if you're inside the field of mental health, you may never seriously question the effectiveness of psychotherapy. It's simply taken for granted, and the academic training process does not encourage questions or challenges.

The field of psychology doesn't seriously teach anything that is critical of itself, and it has its own rationalizations for the questions that might come up. In fact, once you're licensed, many states have a code of conduct indicating that you cannot do or say anything that negatively impacts the field.

It's fair to say that this is not a field open to questions about its' effectiveness. If you're outside the mental health field however, it's common to suspect it may not be as effective as advertised.

People outside the field hold these questions because they have either tried to find help in psychotherapy, or know someone who has. And their experience doesn't strongly validate the idea that psychotherapy is an effective tool for change.

The accumulated wisdom of our culture suggests that talk is cheap, and our life experience consistently supports this. Our perspective would be different if we believed that talking caused people to learn, change and take action. But we don't, and this leaves us reasonably doubtful of claims to the contrary.

This strange situation exists because psychology has refused to acknowledge a hard reality. A reality it has had ample time to acknowledge and incorporate. The reality that talking about something, doesn't reliably cause that something to change. And that this is true no matter how you talk about it, or for how long.

The conversation, and structured interaction we call psychotherapy doesn't consistently result in a decision, followed by action, resulting in learning. This is important to note because this is what change is. Change is a decision, followed by action(s), to achieve a specific outcome.

As a result of deciding, and taking action(s) to achieve an outcome you learn and change. We need to be clear about this so let's look at this idea again. Change is a decision, followed by action(s) to achieve a specific outcome. As a result of making the decision, and taking the actions, you learn. It's the process of committing to a decision, and then taking action(s) in real life, that brings about learning.

This learning is the foundation for what we call change. Psychotherapy, depending on the theory, has many different perceptions of the goal, and how to get there. But in no direct way, does any theory of psychotherapy focus on decision, followed by action, resulting in learning.

The reason for this, is that psychology, and by extension psychotherapy, appears to fundamentally misunderstand the reality of change. Psychology badly wants to believe, that change is the inevitable result of deductive reasoning, and cognitive understanding of information, primarily about the past, and to a lesser degree the present.

This understanding, when complete enough, and reasoning when correct enough, naturally results in change. You need only have the right information, understand the right things, and cognitively process all this in the right way, and change is yours.

This belief is in opposition to the idea that change is a decision you make to achieve a future outcome, followed by actions you take that result in learning. It's true that all this could happen in psychotherapy, but most often it's not the focus. The language based, cognitive reasoning process used by psychotherapy strongly tends to favor the past, and to a lesser extent the present.

It is primarily forensic, which means that it's focused on what happened, rather than what will happen. The benefit of a forensic focus is that everyone gets to feel smart and safe. The problem with a forensic focus is that is doesn't require you to actually do anything. No action, no learning, and no learning, no change.

This is exactly the reason why talk is cheap. A decision to achieve an outcome, followed by action(s), that results in learning, has to be focused on the future. You have to identify what you want in the future, and then accept responsibility for it.

This responsibility is displayed as action in the world resulting in learning. This is the only way useful change happens. Psychotherapy in many of its forms does touch the present moment, but the present is gone in an instant. When we think we're talking about the present, we're very often talking about the past.

Real change begins with a future outcome you would like to have. You make a decision right now to achieve that outcome, and then take action(s) on your decision. The process of taking the actions, brings about learning, and this learning is the foundation of change. This idea is not psychology, it's common-sense every day reality.

If you want change, focus on what you will do tomorrow, make plans, and then absolutely do that. Psychology has an enviable position. It gets to define human problems, and then define the methods to treat the problems that it decided were real. Psychology has created the whole package.

Theories of human development, classifications of psychopathology, and then the treatment modalities to address all this. It created a body of information based on its own research around its own theories, and then built this into a field of academic study. This academic field has been accepted as one of the social sciences.

Psychology and psychotherapy are self-constructed, self-contained and self-validated. The way the field defines its theories, determines its research and practice. The way it practices, determine the limits of its field of vision, as well as what it sees as useful.

As a result of this situation, psychology's perspective on itself, frequently differs from the prospective of society, culture, the individual, and the reality of human life. And even though most people suspect that the field is not what it suggests it is, this has had little impact on its theory and practice.

To disagree with psychology is to be misinformed, wrong, or worse mentally ill. As a self-enclosed loop that tolerates limited criticism, psychology is going to have some inherent difficulties in its relationship with human beings, and their experience of day-to-day reality.

Even with these difficulties, psychology, like any academic field that involves licensure, is compelled to either ignore these difficulties, or pathologize them, and then move forward to enlarge and perfect its jurisdiction. Psychology has done exactly this. It has worked diligently to defend against, and control anything that could meaningfully disagree with it, or be usefully critical of it.

Over time, psychology has been confronted with reality, common sense, and general feedback, suggesting somethings not right. But due to its self-enclosed nature, it's been able to ignore these problems, deny useful feedback, and in many cases, pathologize the criticism, or the critic. It should be noted that this seems to be a natural tendency of academic science, as well as any field that's tied to licensure.

The danger of this tendency, is that it has allowed psychology to attempt to explain away, or ignore the effectiveness question. In terms psychology should understand, it seems to be engaged in a combination of rationalization and denial. One of the ways we can begin to cope with the effectiveness question, is to acknowledge it.

We should give up the rationalization and denial. We should say out loud that this thing we call psychotherapy, may not be as effective as we've been told. And we should devote ourselves to the serious exploration of what is effective at helping people change. There are other fields, practices, and perspectives, that suggest they can effectively get people to make a decision, act and learn.

But these fields are not, for the most part academic psychology. They are, most often learned skills based on experience, wisdom and common sense. If we say we care about effectiveness, we need to consider if these common sense, skill-based approaches may be a useful direction to look in.

Psychology doesn't seem to be genuinely interested in self-assessment, and it's not at all friendly to the idea that there could be skills from other areas of life that might be useful in the change process. The field is aware of that there are common-sense, reality-based skills in the culture that suggest they can help people.

But sense the field cannot take ownership of these skills it simply ignores them, or devalues them, and then suggests that it is the only real option for change. This ongoing pattern of denial, and rationalization results in a large blind spot.

Psychology doesn't seem eager to consider anything that it can't own, or didn't produce as a valid and useful pathway to change. As a result, psychotherapy is left in the position that only psychotherapy to provide treatment for the problems it identifies. And sadly, this means that decision, action, learning, and change are not the focus.

Two important ideas are worth clarifying here. First, only when you make a decision, and take action to achieve an outcome, will you learn anything useful. Learning is the product of this process. You learn only when you walk the walk. You learn nothing from conversation about walking.

Decision and action(s) always precede learning. It is the trial-and-error process of acting in the world, that brings learning. This perception of change, is the way real life works. This is the main reason why psychology isn't as effective as it suggests. It's forensic in focus, deductive in process, and it believes you can learn first, understand first, then act when you feel ready.

And it tells everyone who will listen that this very safe, and very smart process will result in change. An additional note here. We are saying that decision and action always precedes learning and change. Some people will react to this stating that this is not the only way we learn. People learn things all the time without action.

We read and learn. We listen to others and learn. We discover new ideas all the time. It is true that we take in new information, and gather new knowledge with no real decision and action. We can be almost entirely passive, and have information and knowledge given to us.

But you need to consider the idea that gathering information/knowledge is not the same as learning. Learning is the foundation of change, information/knowledge are the foundation of education. Second, an outcome that will lead to useful learning, has to be a “doing”. “I will do X”, or “I will do Y twice today”.

The outcome can’t be a “not doing”. It can’t be the reduction, limitation, or stopping of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. To bring about learning, the decision to achieve an outcome, and the actions that follow all have to be active “doings”. You can’t “not” your way to change.

Not doing has its place, and it’s worth consideration, but it doesn’t bring about learning and change. More about this as we go on. Learning to help someone change, let’s call this process changework, is a set of skills that you acquire through practice. Just like trading green lumber. Talk is cheap, action matters.

This common-sense idea suggests that a skills-based approach, may be the only way to engineer real and lasting change. There are two reasons for this. First, the information we have suggests that the effort spent developing theory, knowledge, information, and research in psychology, isn’t moving the field closer to effective learning and change.

Second, there are skills-based approaches to change that suggest effectiveness in the real world. The only world that matters. Take a moment and consider the fact that the field of psychology has produced a ton of research, but very little of it suggests strong evidence of effectiveness. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case.

Psychological research absolutely suggests that when its approaches are compared to nothing at all, and we don't really seriously consider the validity problems, it can be statistically effective. When we begin to look at this research with even a moderately critical eye however, it quickly starts to unravel.

To put it simply, after more than one hundred years of research, psychology has not been able to display evidence of an effective change process. Now ask yourself how can I support this statement? If you've never read Robyn Dawes book, House of Cards, (1994) you should.

It doesn't surprise me if you're in the mental health field and you didn't read it. For some reason it didn't get the kind of reception from psychology that would place it on the syllabus. I suspect that psychology largely ignored the book because Dawes not only understands research methodology, and statistical analysis, but he also understood the reality of the human decision-making process.

In his book, he said three things that everyone in the field of psychology should hear and take in. He said that when you engage in a sound meta-analysis of the research regarding the effectiveness of psychotherapy, from the patient's perspective, three things emerge.

First, the clinician's educational program, and degree type have no meaningful connection to patient outcomes. Two, the total years of clinical experience have no meaningful connection to patient outcomes. Three, and this one's important, from the patient's perspective minimally trained paraprofessionals are as effective as licensed clinicians.

Now… you can rationalize these three points, or deny them… and good luck with that. Or you can accept the idea that psychology, and the whole mental health field is refusing to acknowledge something important. It's time we admit that helping another person change has little to do with academics, education, licensure or experience.

Dawes goes on to talk in some detail about psychology's habit of denying, avoiding, rationalizing, or destroying ideas/data that are critical of, or problematic for the field. He gives detailed examples of psychology attending to research, information, and data that supports its perception of itself, and ignoring what does not.

This often places the field in the position of embracing ideas/data that don't pass a common sense, reality-based smell test. Dawes' three points should give you pause. They should demand that you to consider the idea that the academics, training, and licensure model of psychology, and the whole mental health field, is not what is presents itself to be.

It is not as effective as is suggests. And it is not, he only, or safest option available to help people change. The simple fact is that Dawes has called the whole psychology/psychotherapy project into question, and the field is simply pretending it isn't happening.

All the while suggesting that any other way of helping people change is ridiculous at best, or dangerous at worse. We've come this far because I want you to consider a new perspective. I want you to consider that psychology is not as effective as it suggests.

I want you to consider that the academic, training, licensure model of the entire mental health field doesn't insure effective change. I want you to think about all this, and then remember the green lumber fallacy from earlier.

Maybe we would all be better served if we saw changework as a set of skills that can be learned by anyone, and that helping others change is more art, than it will ever be science. Psychology proports itself to be a social science. It gives every indication that it's built on a foundation of scientific rigor and clear ideas.

It presents itself as identical in structure, and process to any other field that calls itself a science. But psychology isn't a science in the way physics, chemistry biology, and the other hard sciences are. Psychology simply does not come close to the rigor, and clarity that hard sciences are built upon.

It may call itself a science, and it may expect to be treated like a hard science, but it is not hard science. The problem psychology is up against, is that the structure and process we think of, when we talk about hard science, starts to break down when we apply it to human behavior.

Psychology, like other softer sciences, maintains the belief that all complex systems (read human beings), can be changed through specific, and correct, intervention. And that these interventions can be discovered, and understood by gathering and analyzing data from a small sample of individuals in the population.

This perspective on intervention however, quickly comes into conflict with common sense. We have years, and even decades of intervention-based approaches, programs, and treatments from not only psychology, but medicine, economics, politics, education, and public policy.

No matter where we look, we find the same outcome… specific, targeted intervention in human systems, that is not based in simple common sense, results in minimal change, and a host of unexpected, and deleterious complications.

The fact is, complex systems (read human being) are simply too complex, non-linear, and circular to respond consistently, and predictably, to specific, and "correct" intervention. I think it's time to do all this differently. It's time for us to look at areas outside psychology for what might effectively help people change.

If there are practices, crafts, and skill sets, that suggest they can get a person to make a decision, take action, learn, and change we should be applying these skills to see if they're effective. Let's actually explore them, and see if they can do what they claim.

The reason we haven't been doing exactly that, is because these practices, crafts, and skill sets are not academic, and not science. This means that the entire mental health field, ineffective as it is, gets to label it as ineffective and dangerous. If we're serious about helping people change, we need a new perspective.

It’s time for us to learn about these practices, and skills, and apply them. It’s time to see if they’re effective. It’s time to embrace the idea that human change may be a learnable set of skills that’s more art, than anything else.

There is nothing wrong with being an art, or a set of skills that produces a particular product. It’s the product, the outcome for the other person that’s supposed to be the point. The ability to effectively help people change, should be the only thing that matters.

We’re supposed to be focused on them, and what they need not what makes us feel smart.

Learning Points:

- Self-talk does not necessarily result in change. Change happens in the map of the senses in the mind, and not in words.
- Change is a decision followed by actions to achieve an outcome.
- No matter what you know, if you cannot do, you know nothing.

Questions:

1	2	3
Have you ever spoken to someone about a problem you really wanted to change, and still been unable to change it?	Can you think of a time when you could see yourself doing something in your mind, and then you were able to get it done? Give an example.	Do you recall a time when your emotions changed in your body, and suddenly you could take action? Give an example.

Action Plan:

- Pick one small thing you would like to change about yourself or your life.
- Decide on one action you're willing to do each day that you think will take you a step closer to the change you want.
- Commit to doing this action every day this week and see what happens.

04 Skills, effectiveness and the big picture

The skills that bring about useful change will not be the product of, or in any way dependent on academic psychology/psychotherapy. Rather, the practices, crafts, and skill sets, that help people usefully change are going to be consistent with common sense, and long understood life wisdom.

These skills will come from areas peripheral to psychology, and they will have developed IN the actual practice of changing the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors of other people. They will have developed outside academic science, and inside the actual business of getting a person to make a decision, and act on it.

They will have developed in a setting where they either had to be effective, or quickly replaced with something else. This is THE point, because the only real value a changework skill can ever have, is its' effectiveness. When we talk about effectiveness, what should matter is not the use of the word science, or the presence of research data.

Only two things should matter. First, does a given skill set, practice, or craft reliably produce a useful outcome. In other words, is it effective at helping someone make a decision, and act on it?

Did it help them to lean, change, and move toward whatever their goal might be? The second thing that should matter, is a product of the first. The testimony of that person saying, “Yeah, I engaged in this process, and it worked. Here is what happened.”

A collection of testimonials from the public, will always be stronger evidence of effectiveness than a degree, license, or data set in a peer reviewed journal. Testimonials, good and bad, are the BEST indicators of what is real.

That’s why they’ve been the real currency of every market decision since the beginning of time. The social proof contained in a testimonial, is the only real proof of effectiveness that exists. The direct statement of another human being, in writing, or on video, who took the time to tell you what happened to them, and then said their name out load.

This is the only real measure of reality. A sincere account of events that is OWNED by the person who gives it. Nothing anonymous, nothing hidden. This simple idea will never be equaled by theory, information, knowledge, or data.

These things have no real connection to human behavior, an in almost every case they are anonymous in some way. In other words, something is hidden. And this is exactly why they will never motivate a person to make a decision and act.

When you spend money on something like a car, listen to what the salesman says about how fantastic the car is, read the information they give you about the care, and then make your decision?

Or do you look at the reviews from people who bought the car, and then go to consumer reports to find out what an independent source has to say about it? Then maybe move on to ask the salesman some questions about their guarantee, and their commitment to service if something goes wrong.

When you spend your money on anything, do you simply accept what the manufacturer says about the product? Of course you don't. So why would you treat something like your behavioral and emotional wellbeing any differently? I hear the murmur already. You want to tell me I don't understand.

Psychology is a science and their work is research based. And then you look me in the eye and say, "Where's the evidence suggesting we should focus on a set of skills rather than psychology, and its emphasis on research-based practice?" Ok, let's put what Robin Dawes said aside for a moment and talk about this.

Let's talk about how strong the green lumber fallacy is. The first and simplest answer to this question is that advertising, marketing, public relations, sales, film, drama, acting and other skill sets have always been more effective at changing people than psychology.

If you want to know how to get a person to make a decision, and take action, go to advertisers, marketers, salesmen, PR folks, performers, actors, filmmakers and conmen. Any one of these folks understand more about the real practice of human change than the field of psychology does.

Ever ask yourself why someone would buy that, wear that, believe that, use that, do that, or be caught dead with that? Ask a group of marketing, advertising, PR, salesmen, actors, film directors, or conmen. They have the answer to that question. They're the ones who got them to buy, wear, believe, do and use it.

This is a concrete truth. You should know, without question that advertising, marketing, sales, public relations, and media of all types work. It works on other people, and it works on you. You'll take in the information placed in front of you, and if you're the target you'll have an emotional reaction that will push you to make a decision.

Commercials, ads, info-mercials, displays, and billboards, they all work on you. They get you to think things, feel things, try things, buy things, do things, miss things, yearn for things, demand things and change things. If you're reading this, and saying to yourself, "I don't make decisions based on what other people tell me to think", the delusion is strong with you.

Everyone around you knows this is true as well. The effectiveness of these fields, and the skills they employ, are simply not in question. You don't get to exclude yourself. They work so well that every square inch of your life is occupied by someone trying to use them to get you to make a decision and act.

The reason you can be absolutely, 100% confident that all this works on you, is that if it didn't, nobody would pay to place it in front of you. Money talks, delusion not so much.

The people in advertising, marketing, sales, PR, film, TV, drama, and even the guy running the ball toss game at the carnival know more than psychology does about getting someone to make a decision and take action. The problem isn't that psychology doesn't realize this… I think it does.

The evidence is simply unavoidable. The problem is that psychology believes that it's better, regardless of what reality indicates. It sees itself as more intelligent, professional and virtuous. And it maintains this perception of itself, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. The second thing to consider is the notable lack of evidence suggesting that psychology, and the clinical skills of psychotherapy, are effective.

I don't want to spend a lot of time grinding down into the replication crisis in psychology. But I will if you make me. It should be enough to say that psychology has been notified by members of the hard science community that a significant percentage of its research, or more fairly the majority of its research, is difficult, if not impossible to reproduce.

If you're reading this and saying, "I've never heard about a replication crisis in psychology", it's not surprising. It doesn't get a lot of press. Google it… I'll wait for you. If you give any serious consideration to the results of the replication project, and the subsequent replication work in psychology, and medicine, you'll be left in a difficult position.

And your position will be some version of the following. When the hard sciences outside psychology replicate research that the field of psychology peer reviewed, published, and then acted on… much more often than not the results can't be reproduced.

The majority of the research sampled, simply didn't replicate when done outside the field of psychology. But maybe hard science is doing it wrong? Maybe they don't understand how to interview, assess, and interact with these complicated people? Yes, they looked at that too.

Please take some time and read the replication research in psychology and medicine. It makes for interesting reading. When psychology tries to reproduce its own research, and hard science supervises, its success isn't that much better. So let's be honest about this.

A concerning amount of psychology's peer reviewed, and published research, will not replicate when it's done outside the halls of the psychology department. You should hear this single point as an unmitigated disaster for the field of psychology. And the only way to escape it, is denial, avoidance or rationalization.

If you were unaware of the replication project, I'm not surprised. It didn't seem to get the press it certainly should have. Please take the time to look at the results of the 2015 reproducibility project, as well as other replication studies that followed. You can access a great deal of it on google.

It makes for extensive reading. At the end, you're left with the distinct impression that the data supporting the field of psychology, and the practice of psychotherapy, is very weak… and that's being kind. In fact, the doubt that it casts on the field of psychology, and the practice of psychotherapy, is so problematic that it suggests the obvious. It's time the we build a model of human change on something else. Something far more realistic and practical.

But, but, but, science? But research? I hear you… but it simply doesn't work. The research supporting psychology/psychotherapy is weak at best, and there's no indication that it's getting stronger. Research in psychology, like most of the social sciences, and even medicine will always be weak because of one very problematic fact.

The "average" behavior of a person, or a sample of people will not allow you to understand the behavior of the group. It doesn't matter what the methodology, or how strong the model. Small data does not generalize beyond small data. Only very, very large change has any meaning to the individual or the group.

This point is common sense truth. It should be discussed in psychology departments, but isn't. We may desperately want to think of psychology, and psychotherapy, as "science", but they're not. In fact, the theory, knowledge, and data involved is so weak that we need to come to terms with a difficult conclusion.

Psychotherapy certainly isn't effective enough to claim a monopoly on the human change process. One other important point to understand. The research in psychology that appears to perform better in experiment consistently has a concrete connection to real world skill, common sense functioning, and universal human wisdom.

And, you should immediately recognize that real world skill, common sense functioning, and universal human wisdom are not psychology. But psychology is quick to adopt them, take ownership of them, and claim that it was theirs all along.

What I'm saying here is that psychology isn't very effective, and the elements of psychology that show effectiveness, are very often going to be elements of human function that have been psychologized. The reasons for the situation psychology finds itself in are many, but they all lead back to the complex, non-linear, and circular nature of human behavior, and the human nervous system.

When psychology, the social sciences, and medicine start to focus on specific behavior in people, they quickly encounter a consistent problem. When you are trying to interact with people, it's very difficult to tell the signal from the noise. In other words, it's difficult, if not impossible for us to understand what causes, or even contributes to a given behavior.

In the face of this, psychology carries on suggesting that each published research study is meaningful to the overall validity of the field. This means that whatever you and I are reading about was carefully peer reviewed, approved, and published in one of the fields many excellent journals. Through this process, psychology is assuring us that this particular result, finding, or data set is significant and meaningful.

And this is happening irrespective of the fact that hard science has informed us that something's seriously wrong with the structure, methods and practices of psychological research. So how is this all happening at the same time? Why doesn't psychology address this? I mean WTF, are the even aware this is happening? Good questions all.

And yes psychology is aware of the situation, but has collectively decided not to own it in any meaningful way.

Rather it seems to have chosen to avoid, and deny the whole matter, and when this doesn't work, rationalize the situation suggesting that its' critics simply don't understand. What it is they don't understand remains unclear. Psychology is simply hand waving this away, telling all of us, "we got this, nothing to see here."

Psychology is locked into this dynamic not so much because it has decided to die on this hill. Rather because it's embraced, and incorporated a significant weakness in all human thinking. We want to believe that it's the small, controlled, individual data point(s), that are important to human functioning.

We want to believe that we can identify, specific aspects of human functioning, design an intervention, do it, measure the results, and then apply what was learned to the whole group. The problem with this idea is that it doesn't work. The small, controlled, individual change, doesn't seem to work when applied to the whole group.

In fact, exactly the opposite seems to be true. Only he very, very large, uncontrolled, data changes in the whole population contain any useful meaning for the whole population. And what's even more problematic, in our search for meaningful small data, we often have to construct or define what we're looking for, in order to start looking.

What we are actually doing, is reaching into the complex, non-linear, circular nature of real life, pulling out one very small piece, changing it, and then wondering why we don't get the same result when we apply that change to the whole group. We reach into reality, and pull out a small isolated part to examine.

We construct the necessary definitions and processes. Then we take this narrowly defined thing, form a question around it, and use the scientific method to test it. We gather our data, and use the statistical method that we feel would apply best to the situation.

By the time we get to the “hard data” at the end, there is very little that reflects the reality we started with. This may appear simplistic, but it’s also a reasonable description of the research process used in any of the softer sciences, psychology included.

The reason that data from a small sample doesn’t generalize to the larger group, is that any time you reach into a complex, non-linear and circular system, and isolate a piece of it to study, none of the data you get from that study will reflect the original system.

The complexity of the human behavior, and the human nervous system, simply doesn’t allow this to work. It’s exactly this problem, that makes so much of the research in the field of psychology meaningless, simplistic, or just wrong. We want to believe that small, controlled, individual data is important.

After all, we believe that the small, controlled, individual data of our own lives is important. So, we’re very willing to accept the idea that small data is meaningful, rather than accepting the complex, non-linear, and circular nature of our lives.

We’re willing to accept anything that gives us the impression that we understand our own behavior, and the behavior of others. We want to believe this because it makes us feel smart, and gives us a sense of

control over our lives. We want to use the understanding we call psychology, to help us feel secure in an uncertain world. But the truth is, we've been tricked… and we really wanted to be tricked. And… umm… yeah, we tricked ourselves.

This means that if changing people is your job, then psychological theory, knowledge, and research, don't really offer what we thought they did. They are not just less effective, but significantly flawed. Psychology simply cannot display how its' academic model, scientific approach, and licensure requirements make it any more effective than minimally trained paraprofessionals.

And the primary reason for this ineffectiveness, is the scientific focus on small, controlled, individual data. The further you get from the big picture, the context of whole group, the less effective you will be at helping people change. The big picture, the context, is the universal, generalized, common-sense reality that we all share as human beings.

It's the learnings, lessons, themes, struggles, tasks, archetypes and stages common to everyone in a given culture or context. The collected wisdom that has allowed the group to cope in a useful way, and survive over time. This wisdom has proven its' effectiveness, not through small, controlled, individual details, but through its usefulness to the whole group.

This big picture wisdom is what enables us to learn, change, grow, and mature. When you look at human change from the big picture, what you'll see will be a short list of generalized, universal, archetypal human experiences.

These experiences are the tools at the heart of every skill set that actually brings about change. It's the tools of play, story, metaphor, drama, acting, and performance that move us toward learning, change and maturity.

Learning Points:

- Helping people change is a set of skills that you learn to use.
- Human change is the result of common-sense life wisdom, coupled with prudent education.
- The behavior of a sample of people, does not generalize to the larger group.

Questions:

1. What is the most useful common-sense advice you were given during your life?
2. Did you ever get life advice from your parents, doubted it, and then find out later that they were right?
3. What did you learn through simple experience that you would not have learned as well in a classroom?

Action Plan:

1. Make a list of at least three pieces of common-sense life wisdom that you know is correct or you suspect is correct?
2. Think of a situation or interaction where you can use the common-sense advice that you identified in the next few days. Commit to trying, and notice what changes.
3. How does the humility necessary to do the exercise above effect you?
4. Is your ego in the way of obvious information, or have you mastered this common problem?

05 Emulation, effectiveness and neurophysiology

Before we talk about the big picture tools of change, we need to take a moment and talk about learning. It's important that you understand the difference between learning, which is our goal, and education. As you begin to explore this material, you can't think about this process as if you're in school.

This isn't an academic setting, and these ideas aren't points of information that you take in, memorize, and then repeat for a test. To learn Changework, you must learn through experience. You will need to find a person that can effectively use these skills, and emulate them until you can display competence. This is very different from education.

If you want to learn to do X, you need to find someone who can do X, and emulate them until you can do X. You spend time with them, paying attention to their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Then, for a period of time you take all this on as your own. You do what your teacher does... over and over.

You emulate, perform, take feedback, and then perform again. Emulation is the only avenue available for real learning, and this is how you actually acquire most of the life skills that are of any use to you in the world.

The nature of emulation also means that you can't learn without a teacher. You must have someone who'll teach you, provide feedback, and hold you accountable for whatever it is you want to learn. There are challenges in the process of emulation learning that people don't surrender into easily.

But this is the point. It's your response to these challenges that provides you your opportunity to learn. How you adapt to what's required of you. How you tolerate the perform, feedback, perform again cycle. Your response is where all the big picture learning happens. Your ability to emulate, is your ability to learn.

The first of these challenges, is that emulation is not how most of us are comfortable learning. We would much rather be given information, and then be able to think whatever they want about it. We want to be able to be critical of it, or believe it doesn't apply to us.

We want to think whatever we want to think about the information, and not have to actually be responsible for it. We want to attempt to perform the skill in private where no one can give us real feedback, and then report back about how it went.

We want to feel like we can determine the worth of the information without committing to it, and then tolerating the vulnerability of actually being judged on our performance. In other words, we want to learn, but we don't really want go through the experience of learning. The second challenge, is that we don't enjoy the emulation process because it makes us accountable to an external authority.

We work very hard to avoid accountability and when we can't avoid it, we experience stress. This stress compels us to act out in some way to escape the accountability that is causing the situation. In other words, we want to learn, but we don't want to have to do what someone else thinks is necessary.

The final challenge is the absolute necessity of a teacher. If a skill is worth learning, you can't learn it on your own. You can't read an book, watch a video, catch a TED talk and walk away with everything you need. You have to leave your home, and seek out someone who's willing to teach you.

In other words, you have to admit that you do not know, and ask someone to teach you. Let's shift and talk about that list of big picture tools for change. As we discuss this, take a moment and notice what all these tools have in common.

They are universal, generalized archetypal tools that can help you tolerate the bell curve of stress and not act out to escape it. Learning and change are the result of tolerating the emotional experience of acting, and taking feedback from the world. Tolerating this emotional experience without acting out to escape it is the point.

We don't learn, and change in any other way. Information, knowledge, facts, and data do not bring learning and change. They help you do better in school, they help you feel smart, they help you move through the educational process, but they don't help you tolerate the stress of acting in the world.

Story and metaphor point us toward the universal lessons we need to be useful in the world. They contain not only lessons, but also the universal, generalized, archetypal skills we need to take the lesson in and hold it.

The reason our culture possesses the stories and metaphors we do is because they have shown themselves to be useful to us over time. Story and metaphor are the very best tools we have to invite a person into a life lesson, and then show them the skills they need to tolerate it.

For the human species, there is no better vehicle. Story and metaphor are probably the most important adaptation humans have ever created. Story and metaphor are a big part of what has allowed us to survive over time. If you're not clear on this, just think about the stories, folklore, TV, books, and movies that changed how you felt about yourself, and the world.

That commercial or advertisement that that made you feel like you absolutely had to have one of those. The movie you saw that changed what you believed, and made you want to be a different person. The book you read that sparked your imagination, and changed your direction in life.

The TV show that suddenly made you understand something you didn't understand before. This is the power of story, and metaphor on human life. This is the fuel of learning and change. Remember a movie that made you feel like it was time to change your life. Not just feel good, but ready to change you. A movie where you walked away creative, courageous, or excited about an idea, or a mission.

See those amazing scenes again in your mind. Feel what happens in your body. See those scenes again, hear the words and feel those emotions. Notice the changes in your heart beat, your energy, your muscles, your emotions, your thoughts.

As you do, raise your arms up like you're crossing a finish line. Raise them high… hold them up there for 30 seconds. See the movie, feel those emotions, and physical sensations the whole time. I'll wait. Lower your hands, shake your arms, and walk around a bit. Get the blood moving again.

Now, stand in one place, and put your hands up like you're crossing the finish line again. What happens? If you sincerely did the previous activity, you're going to feel all those feelings again. In fact, put your hands up tomorrow, and it'll still be there for you. Take a moment and feel it again.

This is the state that propelled you to make a decision about yourself, your life…and act on it. This is what story, metaphor, drama, and performance can do. Just thinking about a movie that you loved, a story you saw once upon a time, reminds you that you can change your life. How does one person use story/metaphor/drama/performance to help another change?

A skilled changeworker uses these tools to create an experience that changes the mood, the state of the other person. By state, I'm talking about your neurophysiological state… and your state is everything. The reason that your state is everything, is that all memory, cognition, emotion, learning, and behavior is state dependent.

All of your beliefs, attitudes, and values are state dependent. Remember what happened when you saw that movie in your mind, and felt those feelings? Put your hands up again, stay there a moment. The memories, cognition, emotion, learning, and behavior associated with that state is very useful to you.

You perception of yourself, others, the world, your life, and your relationship to reality itself, at any given moment, depends on your neurophysiological state/mood. You're one person with your mother, and another person on Friday night when you're out with your friends.

Take a moment, and realize that this is the literal truth. These two people have different behaviors, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors. They have different resting pulse rates, blood pressure, hormone levels, metabolism and brain function. They're very different people.

So, it should come as no surprise that the things you're naturally gifted with, effective at, or love doing have a neurophysiological state that goes with them. The problems you have, the recurring negative experiences in your life, also have a neurophysiological state that goes with them.

When we use the term state, or mood, we're talking about a pattern in your neurophysiology. The whole pattern is part of an adaptive process. In some way, it lowers your stress level, and helps you achieve the conscious, and/or unconscious needs your actually looking for. This is an important concept to grasp, because if you intend to help other people change, you're talking about helping them to start, stop, interrupt

and/or change their neurophysiological state, to something that's more useful to them as they move toward their outcome. The last two of the big common-sense tools that can help people change, are persuasion and manipulation.

In the world of psychotherapy these words have a bad reputation. They are seen unethical, abusive, or even illegal. When in fact, they're universal skills that we use with each other every day. If you don't think your being persuaded, or that your beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors aren't being manipulated every second of every day, you may be a bit naive.

Persuasion, and manipulation are ABSOLUTLY normal features of everyday life. Manipulation and persuasion are used very effectively to influence your neurophysiological state all the time. All of the advertising, marketing, social media, news, and entertainment you take in is being actively, and strategically used to change your neurophysiological state.

You're experience is being manipulated, and you're being persuaded to adopt different emotional experiences designed to get you to make decisions and act on them. Like it or not this is what's happening to you all day every day. Manipulation and persuasion aren't bad in and of themselves.

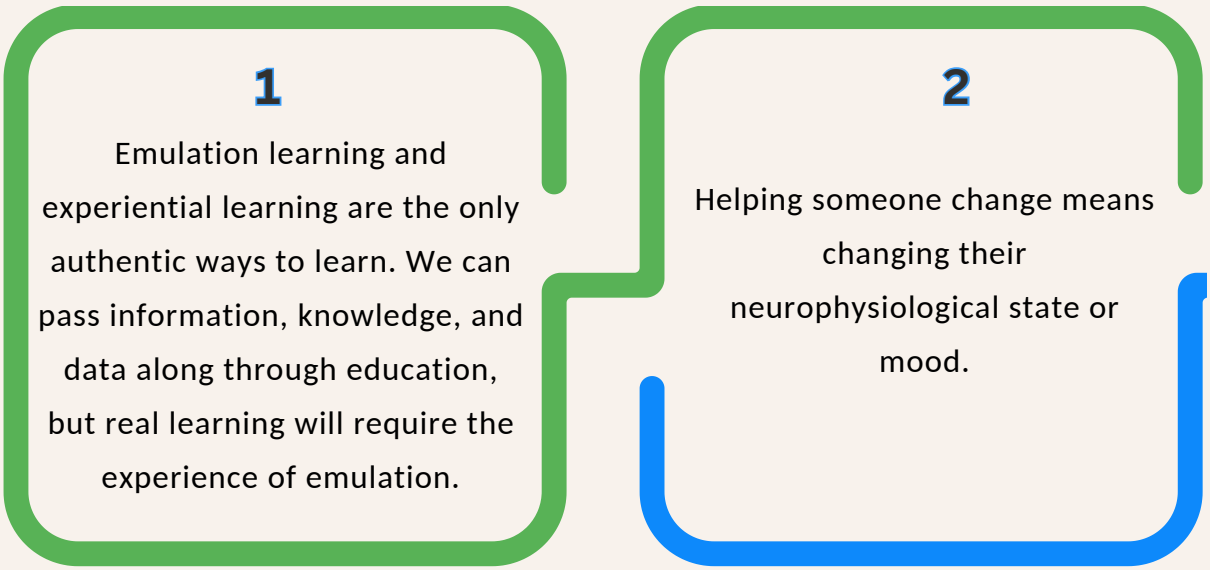
Any problem with them is one of intent. They can be used for positive, and for negative ends. The relative ethics of manipulation, and persuasion come down to what the individual wants as an outcome, and the intent of those interacting with them. And one more point that will

complicate this matter even further. Sometimes the only way you can help someone make a decision and act, is to use manipulation. Even if they want to act, sometimes they can't get there any other way. Many people what to change this, or that, but never seem to get it done.

For many of them, it will take manipulation and persuasion to get them where they want to be. The plain fact of the matter is that persuasion and manipulation are skills that can be used to achieve positive goals or negative goals. This is where intentions, and accountability matter.

We'll talk more about these issues later, but suffice it to say that if you want to help someone achieve an outcome efficiently, and effectively you'll find yourself in situations where you'll need to use persuasion and manipulation.

Learning Points:



Questions:

1. Put your hands up above your head, palms facing the way you're looking, and use only your eyes to look up at the ceiling. Now smile, and look right and left quickly about 10 times. Shake your hands while you do this. Now do it all again, and try to feel sad. Intentionally think of something sad. Describe what happens?
2. Think of three stories, movies or TV shows that changed your life. How did you change, and how is your life different as a result?

Action plan:

- In your mind, see yourself in a situation, or interaction that is difficult. See what you do, and how you feel.
- Now, imagine the situation, or interaction again, but see everyone else with colorful paint spatters on their face.
- Now imagine their shoes three sizes too big.
- Imagine dealing with the situation again.
- How is your mood different?
- How could you bring that mood into other situations or interactions?

06 States, mistakes & the bell curve

If you're a changeworker, you're in the business of learning, and teaching people to learn. You're a teacher, a trainer, focused on helping other people have the experiences they need to learn to start, stop, interrupt, or change a pattern/state.

Negative experiences, negative behaviors, are neurophysiological patterns, made up of moods, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that have become un-useful in some way. When you're doing changework, you're helping that person start, stop, interrupt, and/or change a pattern that's not producing a useful outcome, or not resulting in the experience they want to have.

Any time you're engaged in learning, mistakes are the point. Human beings simply don't learn very much from our successes. In fact, success is generally toxic to change. Success teaches you that what you're doing must be correct, and you're going to keep doing it. Because of this, very few people will change when they experience success.

Only in your mistakes, do you have the opportunity to learn something new. The experience of your mistake, when you accept it, require that you take feedback from the world around you, and then use this feedback to change what you're doing, thinking and feeling.

It's the experience of the mistake, acceptance of it, and the feedback that follows, that brings about learning. Mistakes are opportunities for accountability that allow us to learn, and then change what we're doing in some way.

The decision to accept the experience of being wrong, and then take feedback is THE universal, generalized, and archetypal process that leads to learning and change. Through learning and change, we have the opportunity to grow and mature.

You should be excited every time you make a mistake, and get feedback. And you should desire as many mistakes as possible. All of your mistakes should feel like an opportunity for discovery, rather than an experience of shame, guilt, anger, resentment, or self-pity. Really take a moment with this idea. Feel free to read it again.

I'm willing to bet that you can think of a significant mistake you've made, that changed what you believed about yourself, others, or the world… and then how you acted. I mean really changed you. A single mistake that you couldn't escape, and HAD do accept. A mistake that caused an emotional experience, that changed you permanently.

If you can't come up with an example, I'll have to suspect you're not trying. Real mistakes, mistakes that we take accountability for, are often the exact moment in which we make a decision to change, and then act on it. It's a sad fact, but for most of us we have a visceral need to deny mistakes.
At a deep level we want to avoid the feeling of blame, and shame that feels ever present. If they can't be denied or avoided, they should be

rationalized in a way that allows us to minimize responsibility. Because of this, the only real learning we ever get, is against our will. This is an important point so I'll say it again. The only REAL learning we EVER get, is against our will. When we make a mistake, and can't deny, avoid, or generalize it.

Only when we're required to be accountable for it, will we move through the experience that leads to acceptance. Acceptance is the point where you surrender, and take in the feedback. It's this whole experience of accepting reality, that allows us to learn.

If we can accept the experience we are having, from beginning to end, without trying to escape it, what was once too stressful to tolerate, is now different. We are functioning in a new way. Our neurophysiology, emotion, mood, cognition, and behavior, our whole state, has changed.

Some of you might recognize the idea of acceptance as part of a series of stages: denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance. You recognize them as the stages of grief that were outlined by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. But these stages are something much larger than grief.

They're the generalized, universal, and archetypal stages of the human response to anything that is forced on them against their will. This's what grief is. A change that is forced on us, against our will. Kubler-Ross's simply outlined the big picture, human response to any situation, or experience that we cannot avoid, deny, or rationalize.

Reality demands that we move through the experience all the way to acceptance, or suffer. All real, useful learning uses the same structure.

When we are required to learn, change, and adapt to reality, we will move through denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance. You either arrive at acceptance of the whole experience, or you get get stuck inside the stages. In other words, you accept the experience you're having, or you suffer. It's the same for all real human learning.

Like it or not, you either accept reality, and learn, or you suffer. When we talk about learning, we're talking about accepting our experience, and arriving at a moment of epiphany. In this moment, we see ourselves, others, and the world differently. In this moment we feel ourselves, others and the world differently.

We realize that we can tolerate whatever the experience was, and feel safe, stable, and ok. This allows us to take action in a way we had not before. Tolerating our experience until we reach acceptance, results in the ability to act in a way that we previously couldn't. This kind of learning can more appropriately be called wisdom.

Only when we move through the entire emotional experience, and surrender into acceptance do we get the wisdom that supports functional change. When we surrender into acceptance the learning/wisdom most often just show up out of the blue. This is why we use the word epiphany.

The wisdom/learning just arrives. You suddenly realize. Bang... you know. An epiphany is almost always how wisdom/learning come to us.
But be clear, it's tolerating the whole emotional experience, and then surrendering into the acceptance of that experience that results in wisdom/learning.

There's no place in this process for information, knowledge, or any academic structure. Theory, knowledge, information, and data, will make you feel intelligent, but feeling intelligent isn't wisdom, it isn't learning, and it isn't change.

Wisdom, learning, and change can only be the result of moving through an emotional experience all the way to acceptance. Moving through the emotional experience of the stages of change, is a bell curve. It starts slow, and the intensity of the stress increases as you move from denial onward.

It escalates to a peak during the bargaining phase, and then begins to descend. Moving through the bell curve of this experience is challenging, particularly at its peak. The challenge of tolerating the stress of this experience, is the reason people bargain their way out, rather than moving to sadness, and then acceptance.

Moving through the bell curve of change, and then surrendering into acceptance, we learn. This learning becomes the vehicle of change. Because this learning is the result of experience, and not information, or knowledge, it's actually a form of wisdom. But more important that this, it is a form of maturity.

Fritz Perls said that maturity is tolerating frustrated desire alone. In other words, maturity is being able to move through the bell curve of change without acting out to escape it and avoid acceptance. With learning and maturity, we become more effective at surrendering into all of our experiences, and accepting them.

We learn that in surrender, and acceptance our experience changes in a useful way. In surrender and acceptance, we interrupt, and/or change, our habitual neurophysiological state. At this point we are in the same experience with a different state, and this changes everything.

We learn that we can have this experience in a more comfortable, and useful way. This is wisdom, and it changes the future. The sad truth is that any time we focus on theory, knowledge, information, data, fact, and detail, any time we chose to feel smart, or right, we will very often derail this entire process.

At any point in our experience, when the stress increases beyond what we feel is our ability to cope, we can start to bargain. And most often, the bargain we engage in is to tell ourselves we don't have to accept anything because our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are right.

We simply tell ourselves we are correct and there is no reason to tolerate what is happening to us. Boom…you're right and your stress level drops. This simple process is something we will employ at any point in our experience that we feel our stress level is too high.

When you pull this trick on yourself, you'll quickly reject, or rethink any wisdom that your experience may have given you. You'll trade it away for the opportunity to feel smart, and special. This process is unconscious in all of us, and we barely notice we're doing it.

Learning Points:

- See mistakes as information that will bring success later.
- Change is a bell curve moving through denial, anger, bargaining, sadness and into acceptance.

Questions:

1. What activities do you engage in, in which you can comfortably make a mistake and learn?
2. What is different between these activities, and the activities that make you feel stress?

Action plan:

If you have an activity in which you can comfortably learn. See yourself doing this in your mind. See, hear, and feel what it's like to comfortably learn. Now, see this same you in other situations or interactions. What does this other you do differently?

07 Science and Scientism

Let's return to the "what about science?" concern. The ideas you're reading about are probably not entirely new to you. And they're probably not science to you either. Not science in the academic, or psychology sense.

This can be tough, because we're suckers for anything "sciencey" and we've been taught to believe that if science, or the trappings of science aren't present, the whole project is questionable. If it doesn't look like science, or have the blessing of science, it's suspect.

Given the problems that academic psychology has, I hope that you're starting to be curious about what else might be out there. I'm hoping you're ready to consider a different perspective on human change. If you're ready, laying down what you already believe, is the first step toward learning something new.

The ideas we're discussing may not be the academic science you recognize, but they're exactly the way real life works. If you want to sincerely consider something new, you need to set aside what you have right now.

Otherwise, you'll never take in what another perspective has to offer. With this in mind, let's talk some more about science and human change.

What about the importance of cognitive science, and what it tells us about the brain and change? The response to this is that yes, we've learned a great deal about the functioning of the brain. But we've learned almost nothing that suggests a strong causal link between brain structure, or brain function, and behavior.

Let alone behavior change. We've spent decades on the analysis of brain structure, and function, and we have no meaningful connection between what know about the brain, and our ability to change behavior. If you think this is wrong, go find the research that shows a significant link between brain structure/function, and behavior change. I'll wait.

At one time, we were hopeful that cognitive science would be the field that made a meaningful connection between brain structure/function and change. Technology, particularly the functional MRI, seemed poised to give us information about the brain that would meaningfully correlate to behavior, and how to change it.

But this hasn't happened. And it's time to accept that the reason it hasn't happened, isn't because of a lack of technology, time, or research. The reason it hasn't happened, is because the field of psychology, neuroscience, and medicine have made some assumptions about the brain, and human change that don't seem to be useful.

These academic fields badly want to believe that the human brain, and the entire nervous system Is somehow going to be a linear, cause and effect system with, let's just say reasonable complexity. They need this because it's the only way their research will ever display a significant connection to actual behavior change. . In fact, it's the only way their

research will ever result in any useful information at all. And while there is an increasing diverse group of hard science teams out there engaged in the study of the brain/nervous system without these assumptions, far too much of what psychology, neuroscience, and medicine present to the public, assumes a linear, cause/effect, low complexity brain and nervous system.

The field of psychology is making these assumptions, doing research, and presenting the results as meaningful because they know two things. First, that public doesn't know any better, and second, that this is what we WANT to hear.

We want to believe that our science, specifically psychology, neuroscience, and medicine are giving us information that is meaningful and useful. We want to believe that the information we get is meaningful because this allows us to feel like we understand ourselves, and this makes us feel safe and smart.

While neuroscience, medicine, and psychology are pointing toward their data however, there is a growing body of hard science suggesting that the human brain, and nervous system do not actually operate using the assumptions we apply.

This data is suggesting that the brain/nervous system are entirely non-linear, highly complex, and almost completely autonomous in its function. This data is pointing to the realization that our assumptions about the brain, and behavior are simplistic and wrong. What we actually have is an extensive, and detailed understanding of the

structure/function of the brain, but only the weakest of correlations between what we understand, and any model of behavior change. Our situation forces us to consider two important points. First, we are farther way from understanding the brain, and behavior change then we thought.

And second, if the brain/nervous system is non-linear, complex, and autonomous we may not see a clear connection between the brain and behavior change. The reality of our situation is that the logic of looking to the brain as the key to behavior change may be us looking at the problem from the wrong end.

We have very little evidence to suggest that psychotherapy, medication, or any other brain focused treatment has a significant impact on behavior change. The primary reason that we can't treat the brain, and impact behavior is that the human brain, and nervous system are simply too non-linear, complex, and autonomous for our simplistic interventions to translate into meaningful, desirable, behavior change.

It is very likely that the nature of the brain/nervous system may make it very difficult, if not impossible, to get from the brain to behavior. It may be the case that the only functional pathway available, is from behavior, to brain. My concern with the brain, and behavior change, also applies to genetics.

Our genes, and their relationship to behavior is also incredibly non-linear, unfathomably complex, and far too autonomous to suggest anything in the way of specific causality. The impact that our genes have

on our behavior, appears to be so complex, nonlinear, and autonomous that right now it's also the proverbial black box. We do have a substantive list of genes that correlate significantly with specific medical, and developmental issues, but this is not the case with behavior.

This leaves us in same conversation we had about the brain and behavior change. The only way we can talk about genes and behavior at all, is by simplifying the entire research process to such an extent that it loses almost all meaning.

We focus on the simplistic idea of correlating the presence of a gene, to the presence of a behavior. Then convincing ourselves that a weak correlation between this aspect of the genome, and some element of behavior is significant to real life.

Given what we are beginning to understand about the genome, this kind of thinking should be laughable. To maintain the oversimplified assumption that the gene/behavior connection will be this simplistic, and then suggest it to others that this is the case, is irresponsible, and even dangerous when we do so in the face of what we know about the autonomous, complexity of the genome, and the non-linear nature of its relationship to human behavior.

It's impossible to believe that psychology, neuroscience, medicine don't understand this. So, we're left with the realization that they are just giving us what we really want to believe. The idea that we're only moments away from the breakthrough that will allow us to sequence a

person's genome, and then use this data to meaningfully manage behavior. Let's consider two pieces of information, that will undoubtable dampen this enthusiasm. The first is that a large percentage of the genome seems to exist, only to shape the functioning of the remainder of the genome.

There's some discussion as to the numbers here, but something like 98% of the genome doesn't appear to be coding for proteins. Rather, it seems to be functioning as a source of autonomous, non-linear feedback for the smaller part of the genome that is coding for proteins.

What the 98% is doing, or how it's doing it, is a mystery at this point. But I think we can reject the idea that it's junk DNA just sitting around for decoration. Secondly, yes we have sequenced the genome, but it's simply a roadmap.

It's important to remember that the map is not the territory. The map tells us nothing about the autonomous, complex, and non-linear interactions between, and among our individual genes. Even when we identify a specific gene, and correlate it to a structure/function/behavior we have no real idea how other genes might be, or are acting on it.

When you consider the incredible size of the genome, and the complexity involved, this is a huge problem. The point in bringing up these two issues is to ground us in the very real complexity of the genome. Mapping the genome was an amazing thing. But it is not a cause/effect, low complexity system with linear functions.

It's exactly the opposite. If we truly appreciate this, we need to recognize that any meaningful mathematical correlation between genes and behavior, let alone genes and behavior change, will be somewhere between extremely challenging and improbable.

Let's say you identified a gene, and the correlation between this gene, and behavior X is very high. You then have to grapple with the fact that there is an immense, empty space in our understanding between possessing a gene, and expressing that gene in the world.

Even if we knew the function of every protein coding gene, we still wouldn't know with a high degree of confidence what was going to happen in real life. This is the problem with genetics and behavior. The important point here is that possessing a gene is not the same as expressing a gene, and this is what matters.

Even if we are talking about a protein coding gene, whether or not you express that gene, seems to be the product of a highly complex relationship between your individual life experience (read nurture), and the autonomous, non-linear relationships within the genome (read nature).

Although the jury might not be entirely certain, it appears that nurture often has the upper hand in the nature/nurture debate. And this makes matters even more complicated. We desperately want the brain, and the genome to have cause/effect, low complexity, linear functions where the relationship between parts, processes, and products is clear and constant. But our reality is the opposite.

The relationship between the nervous system, and behavior as well as the genome, and behavior is incredibly autonomous, complex and nonlinear. This means that understanding how any part/piece/function works, probably won't allow us to understand anything beyond that part/piece/function... and really, if we're honest, maybe not even that.

Human behavior is the product of the non-linear interaction of multiple complex systems, including the genome, the brain, the nervous system, and the world around you. The level of complexity we're talking about here, is almost beyond imagining, and it's going to make understanding, and prediction of even the weakest relationship between brain and behavior extremely difficult to find, and even harder to hold on to.

But it's precisely this complexity, that will make psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and genetics appear so promising as a source of understanding and control. But in the end only to provide interesting, and superficial details, and little else that will lend itself to the human change process.

We so badly want to feel smart, and have a sense of control that we're suckers for any scientific idea if it's sexy enough. The more "sciencey" sounding the more we like it.

Learning Points:

- It is always challenging to apply the scientific method/process to human behavior.
- We are a complex, non-linear, and autonomous nervous system acting in the world.

Questions:

Do you find that it's difficult to learn new information if you think you already understand the subject?

Action plan:

Pick something you believe and seek out information that suggests you're wrong. What does it feel like to do this?

08 Important assumptions & the skills that follow

Learning to do changework, learning to help a person make a decision, and take action to achieve an outcome, is a skill. A skill that anyone can learn. When I say that changework is a skill, I'm saying that it's separate from psychological theory, knowledge, information and training.
It doesn't require academic study, years of graduate education, or some type of licensure. It requires a desire to help others, and a willingness to put in the effort, and apply these skills to yourself. This is the challenging part. To help others change, you MUST be able to change yourself. This is why most of us, need a teacher.

As a skill set there're no theories to fit people into, no body of knowledge requiring advanced education, and no research data to inform your actions. What you have instead are assumptions, beliefs, and values drawn from common sense reality that has shown itself to be useful.

These assumptions, beliefs, and values, inform a set of skills that over time have proven themselves useful at helping people learn and change. Notice that I didn't say anything about these assumptions, beliefs, and values being true, factual, right, or correct. What they are is useful, and

through usefulness they're effective. Right or wrong, have less to do with usefulness and effectiveness than most people think. You will find however that what's useful and effective, will often seem right or correct... once you master the skill.

How about the assumption we talked about a moment ago, "The only real change we ever experience is against our will."? One of the best reasons to accept this assumption is because if you're old enough, it was taught to you, and every other person you knew.

You would have been told that you couldn't quit something you started. You never walk away from a promise or commitment. You would have been told that you had to persevere when things were difficult because that was a measure of who you were. Staying put when things got difficult would make you a better person.

You were told you must endure situations that you really wanted out of because it would help you to grow up, and become a better person. If you're over the age of 40, it's likely that you've had some personal experience with how this single idea can change what you think, feel and do in a useful way. At one point in your life, this was common sense, it was wisdom.

changework trainers, and students quickly recognize the impact of holding someone accountable for what they said they wanted, and not allowing them to minimize, rationalize, or escape it. They see the results when someone HAS to remain in their experience as they move through denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, all the way to acceptance.

There are trainers who have seen literally thousands of people make radical changes when they're not allowed to deny, distort, minimize, rationalize, or escape a perceived problem. It's possible that this assumption may not be correct, but it works.

Another assumption is that change is a decision followed by action, to achieve an outcome. Change is not a process that occurs over time. It's not a set of steps or stages that end at change. That may be how we see it in our minds, but change is instant.

The idea that you have to take time to understand X, before you change X, is always a delaying tactic. It's always an effort to avoid responsibility, until you're less stressed about the choice you need to make. Change is the decision you make, right now, to take action to achieve an outcome.

That's what change is, and taking someone into the moment where they can make a decision, helping the discover that they can comfortably take action, learn from the feedback they receive, make changes in their attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that move them closer to their outcome, is changework.

Take a moment, and remember a big change you made in the past. An important change in who/what you are. Something significant. Something that mattered. See in your mind the moment when you decided it was going to be different, and then the actions you took after that.

It took effort, and courage, but you decided you were going to do it differently, and you did it differently. You decided, and you took action.

You saw how you were going to do it in your mind, and then you did it. When you think about it now, it may seem to have been a process that unfolded over time. But that was you working up the confidence to make the decision.

It was you talking yourself into what you knew you wanted to do, or felt you had to do. Change is the decision itself, and the action(s) that follows it. The rest of the process is like a drama you go through to feel like you can make the decision, and cope with the stress you're feeling about making it.

When you take action, you learn. This learning moves you toward acceptance of your experience, and you end wiser than you started. Another assumption of changework is that all behavior is adaptive. Behavior isn't random, or meaningless unless there's a neurophysiological issue that interferes with normal functioning.

Examples of this could include schizophrenia, traumatic brain injury or a stroke to name just a few. Behavior is the action(s) you take to adapt to a situation or experience. You act to manage stress, and decrease negative experience in the big picture. All behavior, no matter how it appears, is an adaptation.

And if you're doing a certain behavior again, its because it was useful to you. This process may feel unique, but there's amazing consistency, and uniformity in how human beings adapt to stress in the big picture. To you, your experience seems to be the singular product of your individual social context, your life choices, and your reasoning process.

But humans are much more alike in how they adapt to stress then we want to admit. Regarding our adaptation to stress, none of us are having a unique experience, or responding in a way that's individual to us. changework assumes that behavior always serves a core need, or maybe a couple needs, and there simply aren't that many of them.

Even in what we need, emotionally, we're much more alike than not. Most of us have seen Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This is the principle that I'm referring to here. From the universal, generalized, archetypal, big picture prospective, there is a finite number of useful emotional needs that drive a human being.

And our behavior will reflect the need or needs that organize our internal experience. Your core emotional needs organize all aspects of your experience. They organize the gestalt that includes your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. It's your preferred, and habitual organization, that makes you appear to have a stable self over time.

Your needs organize, and prioritize what you believe to be your personal history. Whether this history is true or not. It's your needs, and their consistent organization of your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that make you appear to have a stable personality.

It's also important to assume that regarding your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, the unconscious is dominant. You may want to believe that all this is conscious, and rational, particularly where you're concerned, but this isn't the case. Even a partially honest assessment of your life should be enough to convince you that you have little awareness of why you do most of what you do. Your own recurring

negative experiences, problematic patterns of behavior, hidden habits, and negative daily choices should be enough to convince you that a great deal of your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, are habitual, compulsive, and outside your conscious control.

You do the same things, and experience the same results over, and over again. Some of these behaviors, if you're honest with yourself, have resisted your best efforts to change them. That is correct. You have resisted your sincere attempts to change your own behavior, and you don't really understand why.

This is the reason Changework starts with the assumption that the vast majority of your behavior is habitual, compulsive and unconscious. You simply find it comforting to believe otherwise. Think about your life for a moment. Most of us have general negative interpersonal experiences that keep happening to us.

Over time we find ourselves in the same situation again. We're in relationship with others, and they become angry, resentful, frustrated, or upset with us, and we don't really know how we got to this point. We're not intentionally trying to cause problems, but we end up experiencing a version of the same crappy situation again, and again.

It's certainly their fault, but why is this happening again. The relationship, interaction, or situation just goes off the rails in some way, and you struggle to bring it back. You have no idea why this is happening, but you know this isn't the first time. In fact, it's highly likely you have the same experience in different context of your life.

This problem might be happening with co-workers, friends, family, bosses, kids, or significant others. And the only common denominator in all these events... is you. This is an example of the habitual, compulsive, and unconscious nature of behavior.

If this point is difficult to take in, I would recommend Timothy Wilson's, 2002 book, Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious. At the risk of trying to paraphrase an entire book in a few sentences, Wilson suggests that our unconscious minds develop habitual ways of perceiving, processing, and acting on information.

These patterns allow us to avoid stress, and move toward experiences that are useful to us. He also suggests that these patterns include detailed behavioral responses, and that these responses become habitual over time according to accessibility, neurophysiological energy, and repetition.

His book draws a vivid picture suggesting that we have much less conscious will, self-knowledge, and self-control then we think we do. Read it. It's important that we understand what science is, and what it isn't. If you're using the scientific method, you would look at the current research surrounding a particular problem, and formulate a question that if answered would further clarify the problem.

It wouldn't provide "the answer", or "the truth", it would simply provide more information about the problem. Your question, would take the form of a statement, and we would call this statement your hypothesis. Then you would set up a situation, an experiment, after which you would gather information about the status of the problem.

Did it change, or not? The information you gather about change, is called data. If your question, hypothesis, experiment, and information gathering are reliable, and valid, the data you collect will help to clarify, and structure the problem.

A better understanding of the problem, allows for more useful predictions about the problem, and its role in the world. The point I want you to see clearly, is that the scientific method is not about finding truth, or fact. That's not what it does.

The scientific method, or just science, is useful for learning about the structure of a problem, issue, or question. For this process to be useful, science must be applied to appropriate questions, and in appropriate ways. When done well, science consistently provides useful information regarding the nature of a problem, issue, or question.

This useful data/information about the structure, and nature of the problem, informs our actions in useful ways. Science is about information, not the truth. This is reason why everything is called a theory. Like the theory of gravity There is always room for more information, but we seem to have a pretty useful understanding of why things fall down.

When we have a very useful understanding of a given problem, it will often be seen as something more than a theory. But as far a science goes, there is always room for more information, and the theory... even the theory of gravity... could change. Changework assumes that if you want to help another person change, you need to focus less on the

science of therapy, treatment, and medication, and more on the skills that have shown themselves to be effective at helping others change. These are learnable skills that one person can use to help another person make a decision, and take action to achieve an outcome.

Focusing on a set of skills, rather than science, is the recognition that the human being while complex, tends to be pattern seeking, and pattern constructing when we function in the world. This means we are very much alike in what problems we have, how we have them, and how we cope with them.

It also means that we are very much alike in how we learn, change, and take action. It's exactly this universal, generalized, archetypal experience of life that allows us to learn a set of effective skills, and then apply them to help others. Take a skill such as holding someone accountable for what they said they wanted to do or achieve.

If you're over the age of 40 I'm sure your parents, and grandparents made an effort to teach this to you as a child. If you want something, you can't give up when it gets hard. And if you decide to start something, you need to finish it, even if it's tough.

We consider these ideas to be wisdom for a very good reason. It's easy for us to make excuses, rationalize our position, and then give up when things get hard. If you develop a habit of giving up when life gets tough, or quitting when you're not happy, this is going to have a negative impact on your life. So, you start with the assumption that making a decision, and then following through is a skill. It's a generalized,

universal, archetypal skill that everyone needs to have. You are now in the business of helping another person to be accountable for what they said they wanted to be or do. You see their actions, listen to their responses, and then find useful ways to hold them accountable when they make excuses, and rationalize changing their decision. You're helping them discover/develop new behaviors to try when what they were doing isn't useful for their outcome.

You're also supporting them as they surrender the attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that don't move them toward their goal. As you move through this process you will learn that helping someone grow into a new set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors is more complicated than you thought.

Helping them comfortably use trial-and-error learning to discover what they need is challenging. As you try new skills, and practice with new people you become more helpful. You learn to see the universal, generalized, and archetypal maturity drama that exists in all of us, and this makes you more effective at helping people achieve their goal, whatever it might be.

As you become more effective with this skill set you see excuses, and rationalizations earlier, and often stop them before they start. The people you work with start achieving their outcomes more often. Soon you become more effective at seeing how the other person will try to avoid accountability in the future.

This skill starts to generalize more and more, and one skill seems to touch on other skills. Soon you can comfortably and easily move people toward their outcome, regardless of what the outcome is. These beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors start to connect to other common-sense skills such as a mature relationship with authority.

You begin to apply the skills you learned holding people accountable for their goal, and you apply this to the issue of how they respond to authority when they “have to” do something. You realize quickly that all of us have a habitual and compulsive response to authority figures when we feel stressed, and we aren’t really aware of what we’re doing.

Our response is designed to decrease the stress of accountability by rationalizing, and denying the way they act out against it. Now you begin to realize that vast majority of all human behavior is habitual, compulsive and unconscious to us. You start to see all interactions differently.

You continue to practice, and your skills become even more useful because you see human behavior as universal, generalized, and archetypal. You realize that change is change, and you no longer have to see each person, and every problem as individual and unique.

Over time you learn even more useful assumptions about people, and the skills you need to embody them. Remember, there’s no theory here. There are assumptions about human behavior change, and the skills that embody them. Your skills are built as you apply them in the trial-and-error context of real life.

Another way to think about Changework is to see it as a set of heuristics. A heuristic is a fancy word for a short cut. A quick way to usefully act that's not focused on being correct, right or even rational, but nevertheless allows you to achieve a useful outcome, effectively and efficiently.

The two heuristics we talked about, and more that we will touch on shortly, are useful because they're not focused on being correct or right. They're useful because they're universal, generalized, and archetypal rather than scientific. They're useful because our needs, adaptive strategies, and life experiences are more alike than not.

As humans, our lives are not the constellation of unique experiences that we believe them to be. We're one of many human beings using the same tools, to cope with the same challenges, in the same world. The leads us to another important assumption/skill of Changework, the realization that nobody is special or unique.

Each of us is just another human being, dealing with the experiences of the average human life. There is very little uniqueness in what we think, feel, and do. Each of us wants to believe that our individual experience of this life is unique, specific, and more importantly, true.

Changework begins with the assumption that your life is not unique, your actions not original, and your memories not accurate. One last thing… when you make yourself special/unique, you make change almost impossible.

Learning Points:

1. The only important things we learn, we learn against our will.
2. Most of your information processing, and behavior is habitual, compulsive and unconscious.
3. Change is the result of a decision followed by skill-based action in the world.
4. You are not special. Ordinariness is necessary for discipline and learning... as opposed to inherent talent.

Questions

Can you think of something you do that often seems to feel weird, or negative when you do it? Can you think of an action, or interaction that you engage in repeatedly that you've tried to stop doing but you struggle to stop? If you fantasize what would help you let go of it, instead of debating yourself, what would it be?

Action plan:

The behavior you considered in the question above...take a moment and think about the last couple of times this has happened. See it in your mind again, but this time see yourself do something different. See yourself have a positive experience. Do this a couple of times. Do this every day for a week. Notice the impact this has on you.

09 Maturity

Scott McFall said something life changing to me one day when he shared an idea from the work of Fritz Pearls. He said, “Dan, maturity is the ability to tolerate frustrated desire… alone.” Let’s say that one more time… maturity is the ability to tolerate frustrated desire… alone. Think for a moment. Particularly if you’re over the age of 40.

This is what your parents, grandparents, social institutions, schools, sports team, church, TV, movies, playground kickball, Saturday morning cartoons, and the entire culture were trying to teach you when you were a child. These people, systems, and institutions tried to teach you this lesson in many ways.

They taught you to be a good loser, and to use your loss to learn. They told you that life isn’t fair, ever, to anyone. They told you not be a crybaby when you lost. They taught you that you didn’t have to be the best, but you did have to do your best. And they taught you that you should never, ever, be a tattle tale.

These ideas used to be part of the common-sense wisdom about life that we all shared. The world around you, and everyone in it, reinforced the assumption that will not always get your wants/needs met. And when you don’t, it’s going to suck, and you’re expected to be able to tolerate that experience without acting out, and making the rest of us put up with your butthurt.

How you cope with the experience of not getting what you need/want is a direct reflection of your maturity. Can you tolerate frustrated desire alone, or do you act out to avoid the experience? Do you placate, blame, distract, or intellectualize with the people around you to avoid leveling about what you're feeling?

This question isn't rhetorical. What do you do? Can you tolerate frustrated desire alone, or do you act out in way that allows you to feel better? The bad news is that there's a fantastic, and pervasive lack of maturity in our society, and culture. We're now taught that we don't have to accept any experience we don't wish to.

Negative experiences are stressful and bad for you. If you're stressed you should be mindful, take medication, feel victimized, blame others, focus on you, find your joy, take time out, destress, protect yourself from burnout, etc. At no point, and in no way are we told we should tolerate frustrated desire, alone.

We're not told that we should feel stress, worry, anxiety, depression, fear, panic, hurt, or pain, and then move through the anger, denial, bargaining, and sadness of that experience, all the way to acceptance of it. Nowhere are we told that only in acceptance, will you find learning, change and maturity.

I should add at this point that of course there are behaviors, and experiences that we shouldn't tolerate. We shouldn't tolerate things like physical assault, theft, perjury or the attempt by someone to make us responsible for their behavior. This is over simplified, but I think we can agree that there's a line, and sometimes you have to decide where it is.

Having said that, you would be best served if this line is drawn right next to you. Much closer to your responsibility than you might be comfortable with. Of all the problems we have in the world today, the inability to tolerate frustrated desire alone, may be the most important.

If you're part of the over 40 crowd, think about what your parents, and grandparents said to you. Take responsibility for yourself. Don't quit. You can be anything you put your mind to. For God sakes don't blame others for your problems. Never wine...ever. I could go on, but the point is that all this is the same idea.

Learn to tolerate frustrated desire... alone. This single point was understood by generations of people as the key to a useful, and successful life. The generalized, universal, and archetypal nature of this idea is why it's a main foundational assumption of Changework. I keep making reference to age when I'm talking about common sense, and wisdom.

This is because everything I've said, and am going to say, is probably something you were told by the adults in your life, if you're a generation X member or older. None of these ideas are new. They used to be the life lessons given to every child as they grew up. They were nothing radical, or alternative.

Just the simple wisdom passed from parent to child because our parents, and their parents knew it was useful and important. Somewhere in the 1980's this started to change. Our grandparents, and great-grandparents knew something about maturity. They knew something about responsibility, hard work, pain, sacrifice and

acceptance. These people homesteaded farms, and lived through the depression, polio, and a world war. They actually understood fear, isolation, hunger, disease, and death. At the age of 19 they were drafted into World War II, Korea, or Vietnam.

Todays 19-year old's, and their parents will sue the school if it tries to enforce a rule that makes their child feel anxious. They need a safe space to go to, on the off chance they're suddenly confronted with ideas, words, or tasks they don't agree with. At some point in the 1980's our culture decided that nobody should have to feel stress, because of the feedback reality gave them.

And for God's sake, you shouldn't have to surrender, and accept any experience you don't want to. Nobody should feel sad, or be told they're not good enough. Nobody should ever have to do, or feel anything, they don't want to do, or feel. No one should have to adapt, learn, and change.

The acceptance of reality, if it makes you feel icky, is a very bad thing. Instead, we replaced wisdom, and maturity with rationalization, denial, and victimhood. We replaced reality with illusion and delusion. And now here we are. Most of the suffering we experience, whether it's the DSM or not, is the direct result of a lack of maturity.

Minimally, you should consider that the ability to tolerate frustrated desire alone would drastically improve the situation... any situation... all situations. This is the disease of our culture. In fact it's the disease of the entire western world. In our mad dash to intellectualize, placate,

distract, or blame others so that we can manage our feelings, we abandoned the very wisdom we need to be useful and happy in the world. What this wisdom wants you to realize, is that you need less… less comfort, ease, control, security, illusion, naivety, safety, self-centeredness, self-absorption, self-care and let's face it, just less need.

Learning Points:

Maturity is the ability to tolerate frustrated desire… alone. (Fritz Pearls)

Questions:

Can you think of an episode, or situation where you were able to tolerate frustrated desire without acting out? What did you learn? What impact did this have on your life?

Action Plan:



- Think of a situation, or interaction in which it might be useful for you to surrender, and move through anger, denial, bargaining, sadness and into acceptance.
- Make a list of three things you could do differently that will help you tolerate frustration, and move to acceptance without acting out.
- Imagine yourself moving through that experience using the new ideas you listed, and having a positive experience. Do this several times in any way you can think of.
- Notice what it's like to think about the situation you should surrender into now.

10 Patterns: Failure to Success

The skills of Changework, are built on a set of assumptions that allow you to see people in a way that's useful to change. These assumptions provide you with a big picture view of human experience, and how this impacts behavior.

In previous chapters, I provided a few of these assumptions, the skills that embody them, and then moved on to talk about the importance of maturity. We discussed the idea that these assumptions, or heuristics, don't need to be correct, or right, just useful.

They must display the ability to help people make a decision, take action, learn, change, and act again in a way that moves them toward their outcome. Effectiveness at achieving an outcome, is the only measure of usefulness that matters.

It should be no surprise that a primary assumption of Changework, is the realization that outcome is everything. It's the yardstick by which progress is measured. You establish a well-formed outcome at the beginning, in the first session if possible. This outcome becomes the focus of the Changework process, from the first session to the last.

It should go without saying that if you don't have an outcome, you're not going anywhere. Which is fine because you won't know when you get there anyway. But it does mean that you're taking money to engage in a

process with no concrete goal, and no way to know when you get there. We previously touched on the assumption that people are not unique or special, but let's get into this a bit further. We're very much like other people, living very much the same lives, facing very much the same problems, using very much the same tools to cope.

This is complicated for people to accept, because we've been told that our individual life is unique and special. That our experience, our truth is entirely singular, and different from everyone else. And most importantly, our truth needs to be acknowledged as real by the rest of the world.

The idea that we're special, and our specialness should be acknowledged as reality, is responsible for almost all human suffering. It's also largely responsible for the struggle psychology finds itself in. From its' very start, psychology embraced the idea that everyone is special and unique, and that the key to change is found in the facts, and details of that person's individual history, and thought process.

Psychology believes that it's these individual, specific, facts, and details that somehow need to be voiced, attended to, and processed in a way decreases symptoms. Even though this perspective hasn't resulted in evidence that would validate it, psychology hasn't changed.

It continues to function as though this perspective on change is correct, and even necessary. Psychology is a mirror of the cultural beliefs that surround it, and it has fully adopted the very popular belief that the individual is everything. It then moved on to build an academic field around this idea, accompanied by the trappings of licensure that allow

the field to enforce its perception. And now, regarding your mental health, your individual life history, facts, and details, are not only truth, but everyone else needs to acknowledge that your feelings are reality. So, here's the irony in all this.

It's this exact sense of specialness and uniqueness that makes people immune to psychotherapy, as well as the natural learning, and change process of everyday life. The belief that you're unique, or special creates a hurdle that's almost impossible to jump.

If you're special, and your experience is unique to you, then you get to decide what's right and correct. You get to decide if you agree with what others say, and do. If you're given feedback that doesn't feel right, then it must be wrong. You can't expect a person who feels that they're a unique constellation of experiences, with the complete right to judge any, and all information, and feedback to accept feedback they don't like.

Anything that they don't agree with, or don't immediately experience as positive, must be wrong. And they're 100% entitled to judge it, and reject it. From this place there is no way for life, or anyone in it to teach you anything. There is no useful way for you to change, grow and mature. Your only option for change, it to figure it out yourself.

But this is a problem because, almost all meaningful learning in the human life happens against our will. If you start with the idea that your specialness entitles you to simply refuse anything that doesn't feel good, or fit in with your current belief system, you will accept nothing but what you already believe to be true.

This will always leave you exactly where you started. If you want change, you must assume that you're not special, or unique in any way. This means that your history, beliefs, wounds, fears, and traumas are not unique.

That many people deal with the same issues, and go on to discover that what they once believed about themselves, others, and the world was wrong. You are absolutely entitled to your feelings regarding your experience, you just aren't entitled to believe that those feelings are the truth, and you cannot demand that others accept them as truth.

Without a real surrender into this assumption, you are NOT going to change. If you assume that your experience isn't special/unique, you can start with the question, "What universal, generalized, and archetypal human lesson do I need to learn to achieve my outcome?"

What are the assumptions, beliefs, values, and behaviors, that would help me to achieve whatever my goal is? Then you surrender into those assumptions, beliefs, values and behaviors. Then you act, take feedback, learn, make changes, and then act again. You continue to act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again until you achieve your goal. I

will be presenting this whole process in more detail as we go on, but really, from 1000 feet, this is it. This is Changework. So back to the idea of foundational assumptions for a moment. We've already talked about several of them, but let's make a list.

1. Change is a decision followed by action(s) to achieve a specific outcome. Change means you act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again.
2. Change in life is the result of a change in the neurophysiological state that you experience when acting in the world.
3. All behavior is adaptive, and the goal is to decrease stress, and insure survival.
4. All behavior serves a core emotional need.
5. Almost all of our thinking, feeling, and behavior are habitual, compulsive and unconscious. The neurophysiological states we experience are habitual, compulsive, and unconscious.
6. Maturity is the ability to cope with frustrated desire… alone.
7. You're not special or unique.

These assumptions suggest a radical change from the way psychology, as well as our culture, understands change. So, I'm not surprised if you find these assumptions hard to swallow. We are desperate to believe we understand ourselves, and that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are true and correct.

Our desperation fuels the delusion that we're entitled to demand that others, and the world accept whatever our understanding might be. If you haven't read Daniel Kahneman's, 2011 book, Thinking Fast and Slow, it's about time you did. It's a fantastic book that gives you a couple hundred pages devoted to the idea that we don't really understand ourselves very well, but we believe we do.

We want to believe that we understand ourselves, and others. We want to believe that we have control over our lives. We want to believe that what we think, feel, and do is right and justified.

We want all of this so badly that we will deny, or deflect almost anything that suggests otherwise. And if we cannot, or will not take in feedback suggesting we're wrong, our only choice is to construct a reality in which we get to be right.

We start with the belief that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are correct. Then we go on to build a narrative that provides us with the what, where, when, who, and why.... after the fact. You have to recognize that your need to be special, and correct is habitual, compulsive and unconscious.

You, like everyone else is compelled to build an iron clad set of patterns/strategies, that allow you to adapt to anything that causes you to experience stress. This process of maintaining your self-esteem is an effort that most often starts in the conscious mind, and becomes unconscious as we practice it in the world.

We will talk more about this as we go on, that the primary function of your conscious mind is to construct a narrative that explains you to you, and allows you to explain you to others, regardless of what your actual motive/intent might be. You're a pattern seeking, and pattern constructing organism that will do the same things, the same way, over and over again.

The reason for this is that when you find a pattern/strategy that is effective, you will repeat it until it becomes habit. You will be compulsively repeat it because it allows you to feel ok about you, regardless of the reality of the situation. The patterns that you use day-to-day, are the most effective strategies you have to adapt to life, cope

with stress, and maintain your self-esteem. But the compulsive, and unconscious nature of these patterns/strategies means that changing them is not easy. In fact, the only real, and meaningful change that you'll ever experience, will be against your will. Consider this assumption again.

The only real change you will ever experience, will be against your will. This means that you don't learn anything from what you do right, or do well. Success just confirms to your nervous system that no learning, or change is required. You succeeded, and now you feel ok. Your self-esteem is positive.

The only opportunities you have for actual learning, are when you fail. When you are not getting what you want, and you're not feeling ok emotionally. When you fail, and you can't rationalize, deny, delete, distort, or destroy the experience, you have an opportunity for learning and change.

Failure provides you the opportunity to move through denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and into acceptance of the experience you're having. In acceptance, you can find learning, change and wisdom. By staying in the experience, and not acting out, you have the chance to learn that you can tolerate frustrated desire... alone.

This is maturity. This is the learning. This is the foundation of change. Nothing real is learned before you get to acceptance. If you act out to escape the stress and succeed, you will not learn. And worse, you will learn, that you don't have to learn. As a rule, most of us will only learn when our failure to cope is forced on us. This means that something outside us (read authority/parent/boss/teacher/life) demands that we

accept our experience and tolerate our frustration. They demand that we level with ourselves, and not intellectualize, placate, blame, or distract. If we refuse to level, if we act out, and intellectualize, placate, blame, or distract, we escape the process. When we escape, we don't have to learn.

It's worth noting that almost nothing in our culture, will reward you for leveling with yourself and the people around you. In fact, it's exactly the opposite. You're going to be rewarded for refusing to level, and then acting out. You're going to be encouraged to intellectualize, placate, blame, and distract.

You're going to be encouraged to tell yourselves that they don't understand you. "My situation is different, and they just don't get it. I don't have to feel, think, or do any of that because it isn't fair." The entire time you're telling yourself that you don't have to level, the people around you are going to tell you how courageous you are.

They'e going to tell your that you're right, and you should hold onto the idea that they just don't understand your situation. Very quickly you're going to feel entitled to judge any/all feedback you get as right or wrong. And sense you don't have to feel, think or do anything you don't agree with, most of that feedback is going to be wrong.

You're believe that you are correct, refuse anything that you don't agree with, all the while saying that you want to change. This is an impossible situation. You want to change, but your specialness ensures you never have to. And even as you suffer, you going to feel like you're right. This is a fair description of most human suffering, and it will go on until you

bump into someone who sees what you're doing, and has the inclination to help you. FYI… the moment when they expect your to tolerate frustrated desire, alone… is going to be a challenge for you. So how do you escape being stuck? First, you have to sincerely want to change.

Then you're going to need a teacher/trainer. Just holding the assumptions that are necessary for change to happen, can be overwhelming. Changework sees this entire universal and generalized archetype clearly, and it can teach you the wisdom you will need to mature. It can help you tolerate frustrated desire alone, so that you can level, take action, learn and change.

For the majority of people, this is 180 degrees from how they see themselves, others, and the world. If you want to learn and change, you're going to need a trainer who has lived what you need to learn. Consider a few somethings for a moment. If you're right about you, if your perception of you is correct, then you would have already solved this problem.

If you talking about what you think and feel about you held the answers you needed, you would have them right now. If your conscious mind, your intelligence, could get you past this, you would be past it. If what you thought, and felt about your problem was correct, you would have already left it behind.

So… you have to start with the idea that you don't have the answer, and what you think, and feel to be correct, is in some important way wrong. And that the problem… might be… must be… you. This has to be your starting point. You can't be right about your situation, and unable to achieve your goal at the same time.

And if you might be the problem, you're going to need a trainer to help you mature through this experience. You need a someone who's been down this road already, and done this work themselves. Changework isn't academic.

A trainer isn't going to share information, or knowledge with you, then allow you a little time to practice, ask you a few questions, and call it good. Changework is a set of skills, based on a universal, generalized, and archetypal set of attitudes, beliefs, values, and attitudes, that can only be learned by doing them.

This learning process absolutely requires that you surrender into emulation of these attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Then you act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again until you can display competence. This may come as a shock, but this emulation idea is not how we want to learn.

We much prefer to learn by having information/knowledge, presented to us in a way that allows us to decide what we think about it. We want to take the information/knowledge, and presume, with absolutely no support, that we can judge what part(s) of it are best for us.

We want to be allowed to decide what feels good to us, and then have the freedom to do only what we're comfortable with. We want to do all this, and be allowed to blame the teacher when the information/knowledge doesn't give us what we thought it would. This is how academic psychology works, and how almost all academic learning works. You are presented with information/knowledge, and allowed to think whatever you want as long as you can provide the

correct answers to the test questions. Notice there is not much demand for maturity in the academic model. Changework on the other hand, is not something you can read in a book, or watch on a video, and then do what you agree with.

The only way you're going learn, change, and display competence is to take the whole thing at once, surrender into it, and act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again. To learn Changework, you find a teacher, do what they do, get feedback, make changes, and then do it again. This is the process.

This is where the rubber meets the road. You have to surrender into the whole thing at once. It's like learning to swim. I show you how to move your arms, and you practice. I show you how to kick your feet, and you practice. Then, I show you how to do it all at once, and you practice.

I could explain swimming to you, and even show you a video of people swimming. But you're not going to learn to swim until you emulate, practice, take feedback, learn, change, and practice again. Life is like swimming. You are going to have problems if you decide you're a competent swimmer, without ever learning from someone who can actually swim.

Remember how it worked when you learned to ride your bike? You learned to ride your bike… by riding your bike. You tried to ride, to do the whole thing at once. You failed, took some feedback, learned from mistakes, and tried again. You might have tried all kinds of

things, like training wheels, or someone running beside you holding the seat. But you didn't actually learn to ride until the moment you rode on your own. Remember that moment? All at once you did it... boom. All at once you could do it, even if you didn't really understand how you did it. It all happened at one time, and once you did it you had it.

It was just a matter of fine tuning. Learning Changework is EXACTLEY the same. You get on the bike, and ride until you can do it. To learn Changework, you have to surrender into this whole idea. You can't learn the skills that your teacher has without the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that support them.

To really emulate someone, and deeply take in what they have to teach you, you have to surrender into everything they think, feel and do. This is the part of the learning process that doesn't get enough press. This is THE secret. This is THE action that results in excellent learning. Emulation is not selectively adapting the parts/pieces that you think are useful, correct, or appropriate.

That is specialness. That is you being smarter than what you're asking to learn. If you want to learn, change, and become something larger than you are right now, you don't get to decide if you agree with the skills YOU DON'T HAVE. It doesn't work like that.

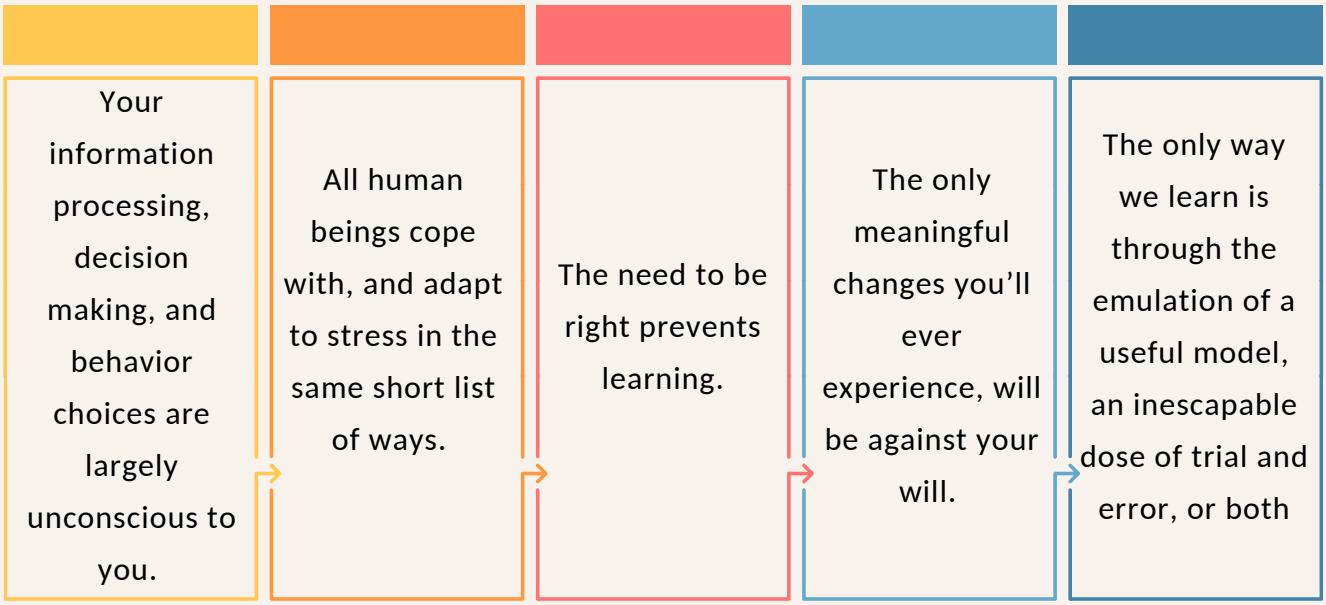
Excellent learning that brings change, and leads to maturity is not a superficial understanding, followed by half-hearted practice, with no real accountability. Excellent learning is a surrender into the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of the person who can absolutely do what you want to do. If you want to be able to perform a skill(s) with

brilliance, and grace, you find a trainer, do what they do, take feedback, learn, change and act again. This is how you mature, and this is how you learn Changework. You must surrender into the idea that you don't get to pick, and choose what you agree with, and what you don't.

If you don't take on all of the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors at one time you'll miss something. This happens all the time. Students will stake out a space in their head, and decide they're not going to do something, or not going to do it the way it's taught. For a while no one knows.

Then, when they're working with someone, and that person presents themselves to this weakness, the student starts to struggle to get that person to their outcome. You won't emulate what you resent, and you can't help someone else learn what you refused to learn.

Learning Points:



Questions:

1. Can you name three teacher/mentors that you emulate in your everyday life?
2. Can you list three ways that this emulation makes you more useful or successful?
3. Are there any teachers that you should have emulated, but at the time you knew them you weren't mature enough to let go of your defiance, or fear of being wrong?

Action plan:

- Name two people you would like to emulate right now. What skills do they have that you would like to emulate first?
- Pick one, and see yourself doing this in your mind. See yourself doing it in different places and situations.
- See yourself doing it well, and having a positive experience. Now commit to emulating this person today, and then do it.
- Notice what happens.

11 Psychopaths, teachers and how to wear another person

There is a small group of people out there who already know, and understand the assumptions we've been talking about, and the skills we're going to talk about. They're intuitively able to grasp, and use this perspective, without really needing a trainer. And what they don't have, they can often build in an instant out of thin air.

These people are called psychopaths, and they're the most effective Changeworkers on earth. Psychopaths intuitively understand everything you've been reading. They understand that change is a decision, followed by action. They understand that no one is special, and we all adapt to stress in similar ways.

They understand that behavior is adaptive, and organized around core needs. They realize that they can emulate someone, and quickly see their attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors. They know without question, that through emulation they can acquire almost any skill they desire very quickly. Because of this, they can see the patterns/strategies you use to cope, and in a flash they can run them exactly like you run them.

In fact, they can run them better, and for longer than you. When you meet a psychopath, they'll feel very comfortable to be with, like you've known them forever. They are going to appear successful to you because they can tolerate any level of frustrated desire to get what they want.

All this is going to seem great unless their goal is to hurt you in some way. Because the whole time they're hurting you, you'll believe you're in control. Right up to the point when you realize you're not. Psychopaths use the skills of emulation to influence, persuade, control, and manipulate the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others to get what they want.

As a result, they're intuitive geniuses at getting people to make decisions and act. Getting another person to make a decision, and act on it is how they get their needs met. No one is more committed to getting their needs met, than a psychopath. With the exception of a psychopath, everyone else is going to need a trainer.

The process of learning Changework, whether you're a student of it, or a client looking to achieve an outcome, should be seen as an apprenticeship/mentorship. The only way these attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors can be learned, is inside a relationship with a trainer who has been through the process themselves.

This isn't information that can be seen on a power point, and then understood. This is learning by emulation, with maturity as the big picture goal. And that means surrendering into a trainer-student relationship. We've talked a lot about the importance of maturity.

Learning by emulation requires the maturity to put your fancy attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors down, and take on someone else's for a while. The maturity to do this is difficult because you're being asked to put down what you think you are, what you think you have to be, and develop the flexibility to take on parts of other people completely, without feeling like you get to choose what you think is ok.

The challenge of maturity is tolerating our gut level fear of blame, failure, and responsibility, until we learn that it's ok to be at fault, to fail, and to be responsible for our life. As odd as this might sound, the skill of emulating other people is how we develop as individuals, and as a species. Emulation is how you learned the basic skills of being a person, like crawling, walking, talking, friendship, and empathy.

It's how you leaned any/all of the skills that are useful in life, and it's how you'll learn the skills of Changework. It's also how you're going to learn to use this set of skills to help others. And all this starts with an eagerness to emulate other people, and see the world from their position. To take on their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another for a moment, until you can see the world as they see it.

Seeing the world through their eyes, and becoming them for a moment, is the foundation of learning, and it's the foundation of Changework. During the learning process, many people, unless they've been in the theater, or had certain other experiences struggle to surrender into emulation. The ability to put your "self" down, and take on someone else's attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors is a skill that for most of us requires practice. You're going to need an experienced trainer to get you comfortably through this.

They will support you, while they hold your feet to the fire, and get you through the challenges of the learning process. But you have to surrender into the idea that you will need to find a trainer, and emulate their skills. There is no other way to learn Changework. Knowledge, and information are available to anyone who can access them.

Effective skills must be learned from someone who not only has the skill, but also the skill of teaching it. Redundant I know, but there it is. You can read about how to swim. You can watch videos about how to swim. But you won't know how to swim until you get in the pool with a teacher, and they make you practice until you can display competence.

Being able to regurgitate knowledge/information means nothing. Displaying competence is the only test that matters. Competence is where the rubber meets the road. To have learned something, means you can display competence when required. Not just read, take notes, watch a video, discuss it, do some individual practice, and take a written test.

These are academic methods focused on the understanding of something. Remember your green lumber lesson. You can be incredibly competent with a set of skills, and never actually understand the knowledge/information behind it. The amount of emulation required to achieve competence is going to be more than you think.

This is because one of the wonky things we believe is that we're special, and we can just take a superficial pass at whatever the skill is, skim the cream off the top, and tell ourselves we have everything we need. This approach is incredibly common, and a complete tragedy because it gives

you almost nothing. To display competence at a skill is hard period. That's why the display competence part is so important. This is where all the hard work lives. To become competent at a complex skill, very often requires obsession. You need some obsession to get you through the challenges that lay ahead of you.

You have to want it, and think about it all the time. You have to live it, and be working on it at every available opportunity. You have to fantasize about it, and see what it will look like in the future. You see it in your mind, and you see yourself performing the skills, and dealing with challenges.

You see yourself adjusting to changes, taking feedback, learning, acting again... and enjoying this entire process. This is your outcome, and you commit to it. To display competence means you're in all the way. In fact, an experienced trainer won't even begin to give you the good stuff until their sure you're in all the way.

Take a moment and think about what we've discussed so far. Think about someone in your life that has a skill you would like to have. See yourself in your mind right now emulating not just that skill, but the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that go with it. See yourself emulating them right now.

Having their conversations, feeling their feelings, thinking their thoughts, using their skill. Do all this with comfort, and curiosity. See yourself engaged in that skill, and using it easily, and successfully. What do you notice?

Learning Points:

1. To learn quickly, you must temporarily let go of your attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors.
2. To emulate is to temporarily take on another person's attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors for the purpose of discovering how they achieve their outcome.
3. It is not enough to understand, you have to show competence.

Questions:

Can you list two or three beliefs you hold that make it easy for you to emulate?

Action plan:

- Identify a skill someone around you has. List the top three attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that you suspect make this skill easy, and effortless for them.
- In your mind, see yourself engaged in this skill, while holding these attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors.
- See yourself feel positive about this, and successfully engage in whatever the skill is.
- Think of a situation, or activity where you can try this skill in real life, then do it.
- Notice what happens.

12 Stress, Virginia Satir & trauma

All adaptation, all change starts with stress. We wouldn't change single thing in our lives if we didn't feel stress doing what we're doing. We respond to stress with habitual, compulsive, and unconscious patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that have shown themselves to be effective in similar situations.

These patterns can also be seen as strategies that we construct through trial-and-error learning to cope with the universal, generalized, and archetypal struggles of life. Since childhood, you've been building a primary coping strategy for stress, and then a short list of alternative strategies for situations that you encounter once in a while.

In short, you have a primary go-to strategy for stress plus a few others that you developed for recurring situations. The time and practice put into them, have made these strategies habitual, compulsive, and unconscious. They're completely automatic, and have to be.

If you had to think through, design, and then initiate a useful way to cope with stress every time you're stressed, you would never usefully adapt. To cope with stress, and ensure survival/success, your response has to be beyond your ability to internally debate it, or reason about it.

In other words, if you saw every stressful event in your life as a unique event that requires a unique response, your ability to adapt, and survive would be limited. All behavior is adaptive, and when faced with stress the goal of your nervous system is to adapt effectively in as little time as possible and survive the experience.

When you experience stress past a threshold point, or you anticipate the threshold coming, your primary strategy is going to start. You begin to move through a series of states/stages that are focused on lowering the stress level in your nervous system. If you're initial coping response isn't effective, your next strategy will already be running.

Some of these secondary strategies are specific to recurrent, or contextual situations, and some are simply escalations of the primary strategy. This process of adaptation can be seen in the fight, flee, freeze, or fawn idea. Your primary strategy is most likely, a version of fighting.

And when I say fighting, I mean to deny, delete, distort, or rationalize. You do this to actively manage your experience, and lower your stress level. If this doesn't work you go to plan B, which may be an escalation of the primary fight response, or, it may be a movement to flee, or fawn.

What happens depends on your past experience, as well as your nervous systems expectation of the experience you're having. You're going to run a strategy that was useful for situations that feel like the one you're in. Your nervous system is always working to adapt, but it does this in the big picture. The generalized, universal and archetypal, will always be

preferred by your nervous system, because this will always be the most useful. The archetypal has worked for others, the generalized covers the most ground, and the universal suggests the most effectiveness. The specific, and unique is small and limited.

If your strategy isn't effective, or isn't as effective as it needs to be, you'll change in some way until you find a response that works. We're not really very good with creative, on the fly changes, and the nervous system prefers what is already knows.

But if for some reason you do construct a creative on the fly response, or novel behavior, and it works this will often be a powerful moment of one trail learning. If you're trying to adapt, and you have success, this will quickly become an aspect of your already existing coping strategy.

It worked in the past, and that's how your nervous system knows it's likely to work in the future. Some of us learned that fighting works, and when it doesn't fight more. Some of us learned to fawn over the threat to achieve a level of connection that lowers our stress level.

Some of us learned to flee when a certain stress level is reached, or to flee no matter what. But for all of us, there is a point of overwhelm in the nervous system where we will freeze as part of an archetypal, universal, biological strategy. It's very important to grasp the idea that what you're thinking right now, doesn't dictate your response to stress.

When you're calm and in control, you may be able to decide on your response. But if you're stressed, your response is going to be the same strategy that you run every time you feel stressed. When you

experience stress, or even anticipate experiencing stress, you will shift into the strategy you've used before. You will move through the stages of that strategy until your stress level decreases. If you're struggling to cope, you might escalate the current strategy, or shift to a secondary strategy. But if you start to experience overwhelm, this is the point where the trauma response begins.

Given the right amount of overwhelm, or threat of overwhelm, your nervous system will freeze. The neurobiology of this process will assume control, and hijack your functioning. When, how and why you freeze is the result of the neurobiological state you're experiencing (nature), and your learning experiences over time (nurture).

From the moment of overwhelm, the entire freezing response is going to be a neurobiological strategy. The same strategy used by all mammals. Changework sees our initial response to stress from the prospective of Virginia Satir's work. When faced with less than traumatic stress, you have the option to do what Virginia called leveling.

Leveling is when you surrender into the experience your having, and emotionally acknowledge what you're experiencing. You own, and take responsibility for what you're really thinking, feeling, and doing. Surrendering into leveling is what allows you to move through denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and into acceptance.

As you level, and move to acceptance, you will learn, change and mature. You also become more "resilient", and better able to cope with stress the next time around. We're leveling when our words, and our behaviors match our emotional experience.

When the words we use, match how we really feel. We're leveling when we're not kidding ourselves, and we're not kidding others about what's emotionally happening to us. We level when we acknowledge reality, rather than trying to deny, delete, distort or rationalize it.

To level is to take responsibility for what's happening to you right now, and own this in the world. If you don't level, you will have to manage your stress in another way, Virginia said you have a short list of big picture choices. You can compute, placate, blame, or distract.

The Satir model is a great example of one of those universal, generalized, and archetypal ways of looking at human experience. The model suggests that when you're stressed, and you don't level, you'll default to one of the four stances.

In almost all cases, you'll initially default to your favorite/preferred stance, because it's been successful for you over time. If your initial response isn't effective however, Virginia said that you'll move though all the remaining responses in an effort to find an effective stance.

The way you move through the remaining options also tends to be consistent over time, and part of an overall strategy. When I'm stressed, my personal go-to move is to compute. I'll analyze, and intellectualize the problem. This makes me feel smart, and dissociates me from the feelings involved.

Then, if the stress continues I'll placate you, and make nice. I'll try to act like I understand, and see if I can get the whole thing to blow over. I may even distract myself, or you with other issues in an effort to escape

the situation. If the stress continues I'll blame you for my stress level, and tell myself I'm the victim. This kind of self-righteousness makes me feel like I'm right. I also get to avoid the problem again because now, it isn't my fault. But if the stress remains, I'm right back to computing again. And now, the stress level is higher... bonus.

Take a moment and think about you. Do you level when you're stressed? Do you own what you feel, surrender, and then go through the whole bell curve of experience all the way to acceptance? If not, what is your first response? Do you compute, placate, blame, or distract?

If you don't know, ask someone who knows you well. Explain the Satir model to them, they can probably tell you how you respond. Take a moment, and think about a few recent stressful situations. What did you say and do? Virginia said everyone has a big picture strategy like this, and that they learned to become more effective with it over time.

There are only four options, so we're all going to be a lot alike, and each of us will run our play book whenever we feel stressed. Once the stress escalates enough, you'll shift into the fight/flight/flee/fawn stages. This is a gradual movement the active strategies, into passive strategies.

Remember, it's important to recognize that fight, flight, flee, and fawn aren't necessarily traumatic. Think of it from a generalized, universal, big picture perspective. Fight, flight, flee, and fawn responses are normal, and active in their presentation. Our responses is traumatic when we move into overwhelm, and the passive freezing response begins.

As your stress level moves toward overwhelm, your active, normal strategies will begin to collapse. A completely automatic, passive, survival strategy begins. Amost instantly our neurobiology begins to freeze. This response is biological, primitive, and passive.

These more primitive responses include, dissociation, numbness, inability to move, sensory changes, and changes in our neurological function including brain function. These responses are all part of the larger strategy, that is initiated by the most basic level of the nervous system. We have no conscious control over this process.

To make this all more complicated, it is possible for us to experience ongoing significant stress, and elements of the passive traumatic response at the same time. An example of this would be a child experiencing long term moderate abuse/neglect to the point of overwhelm, without the severe threat that normally moves the nervous system entirely into the freezing response.

As a result, this child may respond to some experience normally, and some as if they are overwhelmed. If your nervous system is moving toward overwhelm, and your fight/flight/flee/fawn response isn't effective, or isn't effective enough, you'll freeze. Freezing is the hallmark, primitive, biological response to "traumatic" overwhelm.

It's also possible that you could freeze during experiences of "normal" stress, simply due to past negative experiences of overwhelm. The closer you've been to freezing in the past, or the more often you've experienced the freezing response in the past, the more likely you are to freeze in the future.

Stress is a continuum, and all high stress, and traumatic experiences will be powerful one trial learning events. Any/all learning will be profound, and long lasting with both conscious and unconscious features. It can change not only our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, but also the functioning of our neurobiology.

And without further leaning that makes the experience useful in some way, it can become a permanent feature of our stress response, as well as a source of conscious limitation. As a conscious experience, it will be incorporated into memory and self-narrative. Now it's part of who you think you are.

It's important to remember that the freezing response is also an adaptive function. It's there to help us cope. When it occurs, we lock up, dissociate, go numb, and check out. Neurophysiologically, we shut down, and limit large parts of our sensory intake, and neurological function.

These responses are mother nature's gift to you to prevent you from having to fully experience, and then suffer through whatever happens next. From a more conscious perspective, you don't have to feel it when you suffer and die. And if you just almost die, you don't really have a full sensory experience to incorporate into your conscious self after the fact. Not a bad deal when you think about it.

The Satir model, the progression into active defense (fight/flight/fawn), and the passive freezing defense are all part of one large strategy we use to adapt to stress. We use this single, whole strategy to adapt to stress ranging from the every day, all the way to traumatic.

We take the universal structures/functions of biology, shape them with our experience, and develop a preferred pattern. Our strategy is a sequence of stages/states that we move through, forward and back, to adapt to stress in a useful way. As you adapting the stages/states you're moving through are all oriented toward the goal of stress reduction.

This goal is universal, generalized and archetypal. In other words, your experience of coping with stress is going to be very similar to everyone else's in the big picture. One step in the strategy leads to another, and then another, until your stress level is manageable.

If we move through our strategy, and the stress remains, we engage another strategy, or simply double down on the one we were just running. We keep working toward adaptation, until we have success, freeze, or die. When Changework talks about working with stress, the first step is always to focus on leveling.

Remember, leveling is when the words that come out of your mouth match how you actually feel. You surrender into the experience you're having, and own it. You step into the stress curve and move through it, rather than computing, placating, blaming, or distracting as a way out of the stress.

You experience all this, and you own it in the world, with other people. By having this experience in the world, with people, where they can give you feedback, it becomes real. If you don't/won't level, and you process your experience internally, you simply making reality up as you go. You have to level with yourself, and others if you want to change your experience.

And leveling with yourself is the easy part. It's leveling with others that's difficult. I'm not suggesting that you run around leveling with everyone over everything all the time. Other people may not have your best interests at heart. But you absolutely have to be able to level with yourself, and you need to be able to level with others when necessary.

If you can't level, and take feedback, you're going to end up having to create a reality that works better for you. This is called delusion. Many people with go to great lengths to avoid leveling in front of others. They want to avoid having to own what they're actually feeling. They would rather do this in their head, where nobody else can see or hear.

It's much less vulnerable and threatening. It's also a pageant of rationalization, denial, deletion, distortion, and nonsense where no one can give you feedback. Leveling in your head isn't really threatening at all. In most cases, it feels pretty good in fact. It feels good because you can tell yourself whatever you want to tell yourself.

And then tell yourself that you're right. The problem is, you'll have no real idea if your right unless you level with the people around you. In other words, your internal experience has to check in with reality, through this process we call feedback. Without this step it's you talking to you in your head, and deciding you nailed it. And that is the definition of delusion.

Scott McFall told me something once that one of his teachers told him. He said, "thought without action, is delusion." This idea is far more important that it seems at first glance.

If you're in your head rationalizing, placating, blaming, and distracting, and you don't ever put this out in front of others, you never have to take feedback. You never have to risk being wrong. You never have to be told you're full of it.

This is exactly what a delusion is. It's you believing whatever you want, because you want to, and nobody can tell you you're wrong. The stuff in your head only becomes real when you push it out into the world where others can see, and hear it.

There's no way to avoid this step, if change is what you really want. A good trainer knows that leveling is difficult. It's vulnerable, and scary. You're probably going to default into computing, placating, blaming and distracting, particularly when things feel difficult.

The trainers' job, is to help you learn how to level, and then realize you're going to be ok. They can help you begin to move through the bell curve of the experience in manageable pieces, all the way to acceptance, and the learning it brings.

The idea is to interrupt the old strategy, and then make different choices that allow you to tolerate your frustrated desire… alone. You level, and then move through the bell curve of experience without acting out.

You move all the way to acceptance, and discover that when you don't act out to escape the stress, you can have amazing learning experiences that make you more mature, and successful. More important than that, you can learn that all this is possible, even though you're afraid.

The realization that you can move through fear to the learning that lies just on the other side, is what we call wisdom. This entire emotional experience, the whole thing, is where the learning comes from. Take that in. The emotional experience of going through the entire bell curve of change, is what learning is.

The whole journey, is the source of any/all learning, wisdom and maturity. You learn that new responses are possible. You learn that new states can be experienced, and with them, new beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors. You can use your new experience to build an entirely new strategy for any number of situations.

A new strategy based on leveling, and acceptance rather than computing, placating, blaming, distracting, and the normal efforts to escape stress. This is no small thing… this is everything. This kind of experience is life changing… literally and figuratively.

You're not the same person emotionally, or neurobiologically, when you come out the other side. When I was 8, I jumped off the high dive into the town pool. To clarify this slightly, the "high dive", was a tower, a steel structure more than 20 feet off the water and the "pool" was a gravel pit that was about 25-30 ft deep.

It took me forever to build up to courage to jump. I would climb up there, look down, and watch others jump. I would stand at the edge, and try to talk myself into making the jump. It scared the hell out of me. But everybody else did it, and there was no way I wasn't going to do it.

Can you remember one of those experiences where you're so scared to do something, but you actually worked up the courage, and did it anyway? (FYI, you're not working up the courage to do it, you're were accepting your fear.) You were scared to death, and who knows why, but you did it.

And suddenly, everything was different. Your fear simply disappeared. In that moment you learned that you didn't have to be as fearful of the challenges around you. You became more confident, and you knew that you were capable of much more than you thought only a moment before. Remember how amazing that moment was?

That's what moving through the bell curve of stress can do. If you experience something traumatic, the same basic rules apply. The goal is to carefully begin to move through the experience. To be able to surrender into it, little by little, like pearls on a necklace.

Stringing one moment of surrender, after another, until the whole chain can be experienced from a leveled position. Trauma is not an exception, it's not some kind of unique emotional experience that has to be encountered differently. Like all other human experiences, trauma is amazingly cliché, and it can be processed.

What it cannot be, is unique and special. The assumptions used by Changework suggest that the range of stress from mild irritation to extreme trauma, is not unique or special. Stress is a normal human experience, all the way through the continuum to trauma. It's just a matter of degree.

Rather than seeing stress as a problem, or trauma as a pathology, the assumptions of Changework suggest that stress, even extreme stress, is a predictable part of life. Simply put, we all have stress, and we all have trauma(s), it's just a matter of degree.

If the continuum of stress can be seen as universal, generalized, and archetypal, then we can consider another idea. Maybe stress isn't a problem, or a pathology. Maybe it's a useful, and even necessary part of life. Our entire culture is focused on trying to eliminate stress, decrease stress, avoid stress, de-stress, or any of the other colorful description of escape you can think of.

Changework, invites you to consider the idea that your experience of stress is also your pathway to learning, wisdom, and maturity. It's a catalyst for change, growth and creativity. If you level, and move through the stress to acceptance you get to mature. You become stronger, and more capable.

If you don't level, well… you get to try again. The idea that you should avoid, or minimize stress only serves to make you weaker, more fearful, and ultimately a victim. As an example of this consider the simple physical, and emotional experience of hunger.

This is a basic form of biological stress. If you level, and accept it, you can respond without acting out to escape it. If you're able to tolerate the stress, without computing, placating, blaming or distracting, your actions will be more useful. If you don't level, you will act out compulsively and over time your body will begin to develop problems that can shorten your life span.

I realize this seems to be a simplistic example, but this is it. Generalize it. When encountered from a leveled position, and accepted, stress is a source of learning, wisdom, and maturity. Changework assumes that life stress is an opportunity to learn, and mature. It assumes that attempts to escape from stress are the starting point for suffering.

A compulsive, unconscious habit of escape makes you vulnerable to problems and dis-function. If you escape stress as part of your primary coping strategy, and it works, you're going to do it again… and again. You'll interpret your escape as success, generalize it, and believe that you were right.

The result of this will be a pattern of denial, and avoidance, as well as accumulating weakness and dis-function. Some people respond to this assumption with fear. They'll tell you that leveling, and accepting stress is risky, and can damage you. Of course it can damage you… it happens. But that will never change the fact that trying to escape stress, is the real risk.

Like a broken bone, you'll always get stronger where the break was, as long as you don't avoid it out of fear. The vast majority of stress has the potential for learning, change and growth. Only a very small number of experiences in the normal human life, contain a level of risk that is truly dangerous. To tell yourself otherwise, means you're already afraid. The imagined risks of leveling and acceptance, aren't the real issue.

We believe them to be the danger but they aren't. Most of what we perceive as evidence of risk, is the result of either a failure to learn, or a failure of recuperation. Of course you're going to fail to cope at times.

This is also something that you need to accept, and learn from. You will fail… period. Accept it and learn. Your other option is to use it as evidence that you should be afraid. When you fail you need to level and accept that as well. Then even your failure becomes a source of learning, and maturity.

This process may take time depending on what happened. But when you fall of the horse, you need to get back on as soon as you can. Even when you do level, learn, and mature, you need to strengthen the break once its healed. If you don't reengage the world, and test what you learned it will become a weakness… in your mind.

No matter what happens to you, realize that the risks of refusing to learn are far more problematic than the risks of living in fear. You have to tolerate risk… alone, to succeed at anything. Scott McFall told me when I was struggling with this, "If you can't, then you must."

Engaging risk is necessary for growth. To avoid, or escape it, ensures immaturity, and everything that comes with it.

Learning Points:

1. When you feel stress and you don't level over it, you will compute, placate, blame or distract in order to cope.
2. Trauma is not outside normal experience. It's part of normal experience.
3. We develop strategies for dealing with stress, and we run these strategies habitually, compulsively, and unconsciously.
4. The experience of stress, and trauma is necessary for our development.

Questions:

1. Did you ever experience a challenging, high stress situation that you couldn't escape, and you came out the other side more confident and capable?
2. Take a moment and think about how you've responded to stressful events in the past. Do you notice that you cope in a very similar way, no matter what happens to you?

Action Plan

The next time you feel stressed, say out loud the emotions you're feeling. Whatever it is just notice it, then say it out loud and breath. Try not to compute, placate, blame, or distract, and just experience what you're feeling. Notice what this is like for you. Discover the amount of time it takes you to get to acceptance free of any resentment.

13 Effective coping & secondary gain

People who do Changework are focused on acting in the world, taking feedback, learning, changing and acting again. The reason this is so important, is that most people don't have a very accurate view of themselves, others or the world... but they believe they do. This makes them naïve, and filled to the brim with rationalizations and denial.

Changework asks that you develop, and hold universal, generalized, and archetypal basic assumptions about human functioning. And that you apply these assumptions to your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Let's look at the basic assumptions we've identified so far:

- Change is a decision followed by action(s) to achieve a specific outcome resulting in learning.
- Human change is change in the way the nervous system functions in the world.
- All behavior is adaptive, and it is the most useful choice we perceive unconsciously in the moment.
- All behavior serves a core need or needs.
- Almost all of our behavior choices are habitual, compulsive and unconscious.

- Maturity is the ability to tolerate frustrated desire… alone.
- You, and your experience, are not special or unique.
- The only real change you ever experience, will be against your will.

These are the foundational assumptions you'll need to accept if learning, change, and maturity are the goal. To minimize or refuse any one of these, will result in difficulty making a decision and taking action on it. If the only real change we experience, is against our will, take a moment and imagine what this means.

If the person you're talking to could act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again, they would be doing it. The fact that they're experiencing stress, or some kind of problem means they aren't making a decision, taking action, learning, changing, and acting again in a useful way. They're sitting in front of you telling you they want to change, and you have to realize that unconsciously, they don't really want to.

People who are in pain will appear in your office bringing with them unconscious needs, and strategies of function that will resist change. Consciously they want change, but unconsciously they want have their way, and be right about it. Since all behavior is adaptive, the coping strategy they're using is the one that best manages their stress, minimizes negative experience, and allows them to get their way, and be right about it.

The behavior they're engaged in is their most effective tool to achieve their real goal. This leads us to a very important point, effective coping does not mean the absence of negative experience. A problem, a recurring negative experience, is often part of the adaptive strategy.

The problem has become essential to the adaptive process. It is part of the steps/stages that allow them to get their way, and be correct as they do it. Consider that for a moment. Think about your own recurring negative experiences. This means that your pain, your suffering, is part of the strategy you use to reduce stress and maintain your self-esteem.

That's right. Your problem/symptom is a part of your effective coping strategy. This idea is a universal, generalized, and archetypal assumption, and you need to surrender into it. You have to realize that the problem/symptom is actually part of how you reduce stress, and maintain your self-esteem.

It's not some external, or accidental feature of your life. It's not some pathology you have "due to an imbalance of neurotransmitters in your brain". The problem/symptom is a feature of the strategy you're using to cope with stress, and maintain self-esteem.

This is the reason why changing a behavior so difficult. You're actually trying to interrupt, stop, or change something that's part of a habitual, compulsive, and unconscious strategy you use to feel ok. A person that looks at you and says, "I need to change X", will also be unconsciously resisting that very change.

And to really appreciate the challenge here, remember that this entire process is habitual, compulsive, and unconscious. Your problem/symptom is part of coping strategy, the is running without any conscious awareness on your part. You're not aware of it, and you certainly don't have control over it. By the time you consciously recognize stress, the strategy is operating at full speed.

By the time you perceive the problem, your unconscious is already using it to successfully manage the experience. The presence of the problem means that the strategy is working, and it is the best option your unconscious has in this moment. The reason all this works is because of secondary gain.

You get your way, and you get to be right, because the strategy allows you to perceive the experience, no matter how negative, as a win. No matter how crappy, or dysfunctional the experience, you are right, you get your way, and you get to feel righteous about you. This is the secondary gain.

The feeling of self-righteousness that means you're ok, no matter how bad the dumpster fire around you might be. You may ask yourself, how can a recurring negative experience, ever be perceived as a positive? Think about what we've discussed. People want to be special, to get their way, and to believe they're right.

If you're experience is unique, and your thoughts, feelings and behaviors are right, you're in the righteous position. You're right, and they're wrong. There are very few things in life that feel better than this. This is the reason for the unconscious pressure to keep the problem and even double down on it when it's not working.

Why would you ever want to change a strategy that always ends with you being the righteous hero? Change equals risk, vulnerability, and insecurity. It also demands the maturity to acknowledge that something is wrong, and then surrender into the emotional experience this brings.

Rather than level, and tolerate frustrated desire, we will deny, distort, delete, deflect, and rationalize the experience we're having. We'll tell ourselves just about anything, if we get to feel right and righteous at the end. And again, this is the real payoff for not changing. You get to be self-righteous.

You get to tell yourself they don't understand your situation. You get to tell yourself you don't have to do that, and they can't make you. You get to tell yourself that you don't have to take their shit. Whatever you tell yourself, the feeling of being the righteous hero is the secondary gain.

It's the gift that keeps on giving. It's so fantastic, and this is important so take a moment…that you'll seek out the problems that will lead you to the secondary gain. Yup… unconsciously, you are eagerly creating the very problem, you say you want to change. All recurring problems/symptoms provide a useful secondary gain.

The most popular version of secondary gain, is the feeling that you're right. The self-righteousness that comes with knowing you're absolutely correct, and they are wrong. To know with certainty, that they don't know what you know, and if they did, they would admit they're wrong. This should sound to you like the verbalizations of a five-year-old child, and this isn't a coincidence.

The strategies we use are built in childhood, and simply carried into adulthood becoming more sophisticated along the way. We start with something that helps us cope with the stress of being a child, in a world of adults that we don't understand, and we make it more sophisticated over time. If you've ever seen the TV program, A Christmas Story,

there's a part where the young boy Ralphie is angry because he got his mouth washed out with soap. He starts to fantasize about how bad his family will feel if he got sick because of what his mother did to him. He dreams of returning home with dark glasses, and a cane.

His father says, "What brought you to this lowly place?" Ralphie responds dramatically, "Soap… poisoning." and his parents begin to weep with regret. There's nothing unique about our desire to be special and right. We've been polishing this act since we were young. Each of us has an extensive collection of "soap poisoning" fantasies in our heads.

There's another very popular version of secondary gain called martyrdom. Rather than being right, and really feeling the righteous indignation that comes with it. The Martyr's problem/symptom makes them into a victim. They always put their needs aside, and let others have their way.

All they while suffering, while others get what they want. "I just want you to be happy. Don't worry about me… I'll be alright" …sniff, sniff. You should be able to see that martyrdom is just a back door into feeling special, and righteous. You can feel righteous because your right, and you can feel righteous because you suffer.

Being righteous is a gift that works both ways, winning and losing. People have all the resources they need to change because the nature of life itself is change. Our problem is that we fear change, and life has to drag us along behind it until the stress, and discomfort are severe enough that it's easier for us to make a decision, act, take feedback, learn, change, and act again than to continue the strategy we currently

run. This is what we mean when we say, “people don’t change till they hit rock bottom.” But interestingly, because of how awesome our secondary gain feels, we don’t have to change even when we hit rock bottom. This is why most of us don’t change voluntarily. We don’t change until accountability has become impossible to escape.

Regardless of how bad it hurts, the only real change we ever experience, is against our will. When someone makes an appointment with you, and states that they want to change X, you need a set of skills that will allow you to help that person make a single-minded decision to change X, and then act on that decision.

And with everything we’ve just talked about, I hope you appreciate the complexity of this situation more fully now. You need a set of assumptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors, that are effective in the real world. You need skills that have shown themselves to be useful with real human problems.

To accept money, knowing that your chances of getting that person to change X, are about the same as a coin toss, maybe worse, sounds like a problem to me. When a Changeworker sits down with a person to help them with X, they fully recognize the challenge that lies ahead. They understand that this person may sincerely want to change X, but they bring with them the fact that the problem/symptom is part of a habitual, unconscious, compulsive strategy.

They bring with them the fact that they rely on this problem/symptom in order to cope with some aspect of their lives. They also bring with them the fact that being able to successfully cope, no matter what it

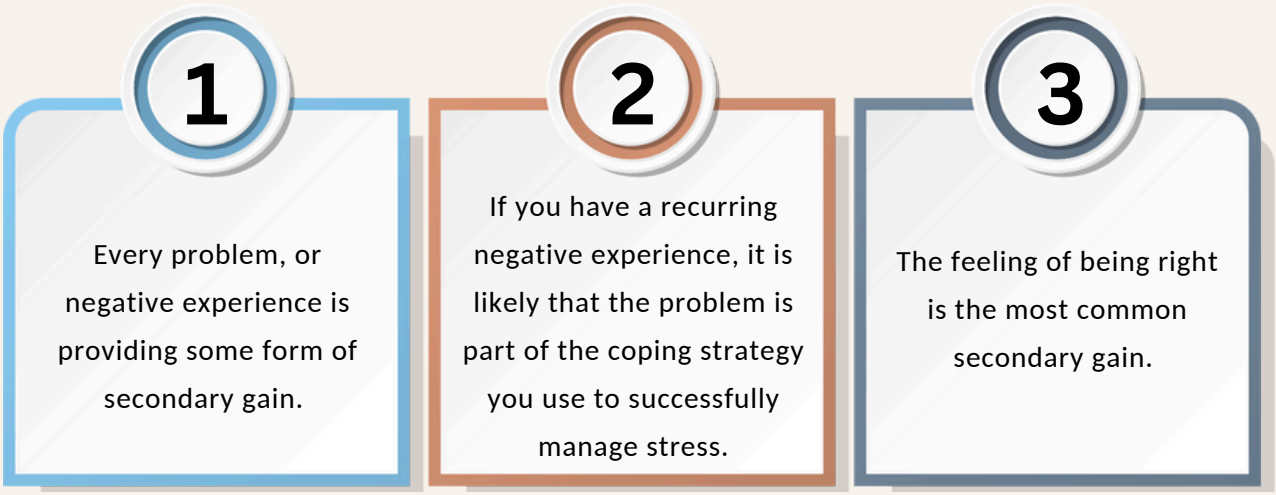
looks like, is a useful experience for them. All this, and the fact that they have little conscious control over the whole thing, but believe they do. When this is your situation, you need more than congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard to achieve an outcome. You need more than data, diagnosis, and research-based interventions.

Not that these are necessarily bad ideas, but if 100 plus years of psychotherapy has taught us anything, it has taught us that all this is not as effective as advertised. Changework's process offers you something different, something more universal, generalized, and archetypal.

It's focus on action, feedback, learning, change, and further action provides you with a set of tools that you can use to cultivate real learning, change, and maturity. It's time to take a look at some of the basic skills of changework. These skills are foundational to the change process. They're the necessary skills that have to be developed to help another person move effectively toward an outcome.

It may surprise you to discover that these skills are all things you've heard of, but probably not in the context of "therapy" or change.

Learning Points:



Questions:

Think of a recurring negative experience in your life. What do you suppose the secondary gain from this experience might be? How do you feel right, correct, or righteous during, and after the problem?

Action Plan:

Think of an activity that you enjoy, and that you're good at. See yourself engaged in this activity, and notice what you say to others, think to yourself, and feel. Now see yourself engaged in a problem where you might be experiencing secondary gain. Notice what looks, sounds, and feels different. Now, see yourself engaged in the problem with the same thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that you use in the activity you're good at. What do you notice?

14 Where skills start... it's emotional

We started with the idea that talk is cheap. Trying to talk someone into change is almost always wasted time for all parties involved. Thinking you can engage in logical, reasoned, information-based discussion, and get the person across from you to make a decision, and act on it completely disregards the idea that the problem is part of the strategy they use to cope with stress in the first place.

It completely disregards the idea that the problem gives them some kind of secondary gain, or they wouldn't continue to use that strategy. It also disregards the idea that the pattern/strategy is unconscious, and they have little awareness of, and no real control over it. But they absolutely think they do.

changework recognizes that it will need something different if it's going to effectively manage all this. That something different is called leverage. To help someone make a decision, and take action on it to achieve their outcome, you will need emotional leverage.

People change because of emotion, and they justify it later with intellect. That's really important so let's say it again; people change because of

emotion, and they justify that change after the fact, with intellect. In other words, you change because of how you feel, and after you change, you cognitively rationalize the change to yourself. You need the emotional leverage necessary to take that person into a place, that unconsciously, they really don't want to go.

The first building block of leverage, is leveling. Using the Satir model to help the person understand what leveling is, and then to know when they're computing, placating, blaming or distracting. As you teach the Satir model, you start to require them to level. You're teaching the idea that if they aren't leveling, nothing useful is happening.

Only when they own their emotional experience, communicate it, and take feedback, learn, change, and act again can anything useful happen. There's a great deal of wisdom in the 12-step programs. Part of that wisdom is the idea that if you want change, you must take accountability for the problem. You have to own it, and then sincerely ask for help.

Requiring that your client level with themselves, and you, is where leverage starts. Do they prefer to compute, placate, blame, or distract, and how do they move through the coping stances of the Satir model. This must be put on the table where everyone can see it. There can be no denial, or rationalization about what's happening.

There can be no illusions, or attempts to spin the pattern they're engaged in. They have to level, and begin to tolerate the experience of whatever it is they're trying to manage or avoid. Over and over again, they will have to return to this when everything they are wants to

return to what is habitual, compulsive, and unconscious. This is a commitment. The process of learning to level is incredibly important. The client will want to talk about X. They will habitually, compulsively, and unconsciously begin to compute, placate, blame, and distract.

They will want to do all this, and tell you they're ready to change X. In fact, they will do everything but emotionally level over whatever X is. But this is how it must begin. They have to level about what they're feeling, thinking, and doing. They have to level so that there's no way to deny, delete, distort, deflect, or generalize the issue later.

They must accept accountability for the problem, and the secondary gain. Then they need to acknowledge that they need help, and that if what they are currently thinking/feeling/doing was actually correct, or in any way useful, they wouldn't be where they are right now.

This process establishes the foundation of leverage, and it prevents them from going home, rationalizing what just happened, and deciding they are right, and you are wrong. This is the foundation of the leverage The habitual rationalizations that make change difficult, are simply part of the process. Your client may sincerely level, and then commit to change while they're in your office.

But remember, all memory, learning, and behavior is state dependent. Once they're out of your office, and their state changes, they can, and often will begin to talk themselves out of whatever they committed to. They will start to experience the stress of their responsibility, and their unconscious response will escalate. They'll tell themselves they're right. They will tell themselves you don't understand. They will tell themselves their situation is different.

Think about it like they develop buyer's remorse. You HAVE to get ahead of this, and vaccinate against this very common response if you want to maintain the leverage you're building. Without leveling, taking accountability, and acknowledging that they need help, the unconscious pattern will have more leverage on them than the experience they're having with you.

They must level with you, every time they see you, or they will be able to compute, placate, blame, or distract the moment their state changes. They will be able to rationalize their way out of the stress that their commitment caused. They will make excuses, and act out against the very thing they asked for. All human beings do this.

Think for a moment how much leverage is required to manage this process. The focus on a useful start is a big part of what makes Changework effective. You have to enter into relationship in a way that brings leveling, accountability and commitment. All this, AND you have to begin to vaccinate against the ways that the process can derail.

The human response to accountability, is universal, generalized, and archetypal. This very human response in combination with your client's core needs, will give you most of the information you need, to start them off in a useful way. But realize that if you don't start your client correctly, from the very first conversation, you'll be handing them the rationalizations they'll use to explain their lack of progress next week.

Emotional leverage must begin at the first contact, and be maintained throughout the relationship. Leverage is never, a one and done situation. The need for leverage varies throughout the process, and you

may find that when the stress is high, and the person is doubling down on their old strategy, you may need additional leverage to interrupt what's happening. Depending on the stress level, all the leverage you have may not seem like enough. Knowing this is the case, there are a handful of other skills to consider.

When the person comes for that first visit, and says "I want to change X", they have to experience a "WOW" moment. This moment is another building block for leverage. During this first visit, they need to experience something amazing, strange, different, or wonderful.

A moment in which they realize, that this experience is not going to be what they thought it would be. This is a moment that the changeworker has to create. It gives the message that the way things may have happened in the past, isn't going to be the way they happen now. It lets them know they can expect to be surprised by what they'll experience.

Giving them a "WOW" moment gives them hope. It opens them to curiosity, wonder, anticipation, and expectation. It contributes to the leverage you'll need, to help them achieve their outcome. To produce a "WOW" moment, Changework uses the skills of performance, and drama. Think about the movie we talked about earlier, the one that changed your life.

It was the performance, the acting, and the drama of the experience that led you to feel those amazing emotions. And those emotions led you to make a decision about yourself, others, and the world, and then take action on that decision. You knew the movie wasn't real, but it changed you anyway. This is because of performance, and drama.

These skills engaged your emotions, gave you a WOW moment, and resulted in change. This is not a trivial matter. In fact, Changework recognizes the skills of acting, performance, and drama to be as important, and maybe more important than any of the other “clinical” skills.

This should be simple to understand. If you can’t become the person they need you to be, and then construct the moment they need to have, change will be difficult. It’s acting, performance, and drama that allow you to become who they need, construct the moment, and take that person where they need to go to achieve their outcome. Without performance, and drama, the “clinical” stuff is hit or miss.

The last piece that contributes to the emotional leverage process is wonder. The feeling of openness that comes with excitement, and amazement. The experience of wonder is very common to magic, slight of hand, or other times when you are tricked in some way. Wonder happens when the experience we’re having, is not what we thought it be.

When done well, wonder combines acting, performance, and drama. It takes you through a series of emotional states, and then suddenly it presents you with something unexpected. In a sudden realization, what you thought was true about your sense perception, or a given reality, or the laws of physics, are suddenly in question. What you thought was certain, is suddenly wide open.

One great word for this moment is magic. The experience of magic gives us wonder, and wonder is a state in which anything is possible. The ability to engineer wonder on command, gives you emotional leverage.

The process of leverage including acting, performance, drama, and wonder all serve a single idea. The idea is that people change because of emotional experience, and they justify it after the fact with intellect. They make decisions and take action on those decisions, because of an emotional experience.

Emotion is the only thing that will lead to learning, change and maturity. It's the only thing that will take people into the decision, action, feedback, learning, change, and further action process. The idea that you can talk about X, reason about X, process X, and then understand what you need to do about X, is the very reason why we struggle to change.

If this actually worked, psychotherapy of any kind would be effective in almost every instance. In Changework, emotion is ALWAYS first. It's first because emotion is the mechanism by which our nervous system learns, changes, and matures. I think it's reasonable to say that emotion is the source of any/all plasticity in the nervous system.

The more emotional an experience is, the more rapid, complex, and solid the nervous systems learning curve is. Emotional experience made the patterns your nervous system has, and it's the only experience that can bring about new learning. You can't talk someone out of the pattern their nervous system had developed.

You can't reason, logic, or information them out of it. The nervous system is adaptive, and it's constructed, and reconstructed by emotional experience. There's no other way to change the nervous system in an effective, and efficient way.

Learning Points:

1. People change because of emotional experience, and they justify their change after the fact using intellect.
2. To produce an emotional experience in another person takes emotional leverage.

Questions:

> Have you ever spent time with someone who made you feel a state of wonder or amazement? What impact did this have on your behavior afterward?

Action Plan:

Make an effort to have an interaction with another person in which you level with yourself and with them out loud. It doesn't have to be a big issue. Just a sentence stating what you're really experiencing. What impact did that have on the interaction? What changed afterward?

15 Presuppositions of the work

The foundations of Changework are built on the assumptions we talked about. The main characteristic of these assumptions is that they are common sense. They have proven themselves to be useful to the general, universal, and archetypal process of human change.

If this idea still seems foggy to you, I would summarize it by saying that the assumptions of Changework should be very close to the common-sense guidance your grandparents, or great-grandparents would have offered to you.

The common sense I'm referring to here is the collected wisdom about being a person that was learned, maintained, and used by all human beings over time. If your grandmother gave you advice about something, it contained a great deal of collected wisdom. Even if you don't see it, or it doesn't make sense to you.

This point sits in contrast to the idea that human change should be guided by psychological theory and research. Again, I don't want to dwell on the weaknesses in academic psychology, but suffice it again to say, that if psychotherapy worked, we would know this. As a culture, a group, and as individuals, we would know it. It's been over 100 years after all.

And most of us have strong suspicions that the whole project is not as effective as advertised. With a foundation focused on general, universal, archetypal, common sense life wisdom, we move on to presuppositions that guide the process of change.

These presuppositions are built on, and expanded from the inherent presuppositions of hypnosis, neurolinguistic programing, method acting, drama, magic, sales, advertising, marketing, the con, public relations, mentalism, film making, and other sources that have proven themselves to be effective sources of human change.

I want to take a moment here, and talk about Neurolinguistic Programing or NLP. Changework utilizes many of the presuppositions of NLP, because they work. They're useful. Having said that, Changework does not agree with traditional NLP on many important points and practices.

The focus on universal, generalized, and archetypal human experience, as well as the nature of change, and the role of emotion is very different in Changework then it is in most of NLP. Even Changeworks understanding of the presuppositions of NLP itself, is different in many ways than traditional NLP's understanding.
So please focus on what's useful, and effective, and allow your client outcomes to determine this. Any other dog you may have in the NLP fight is of little use. Focus less on being right, and more on what works.

Learning Points:

Learning, and change result from generalized, universal, archetypal, common-sense wisdom.

Questions:

What common sense advice did you get when you were young, that has become a guiding presupposition for your life and work?

Action Plan:

Where did you apply the common-sense life wisdom that you were given? How did it work? How can you apply it tomorrow in a way that would make you more successful?

16 Neurolinguistic Programming

NLP has a traditional set of presuppositions that are extremely useful for human change, and they are always part of the Changework process.

1. People can change: This sounds simple enough, but it does fly in the face of the idea that your problems, diagnoses, experiences, and traumas are permanent. People can, and do change regardless of what has happened to them.

2. People have all the resources they need to change: This idea suggests that there are no experiences beyond your ability to cope. If people are more alike than not, then you have everything you need to change, regardless of the problem... and so does everyone else.

3. People make the best choice possible to respond to the situation: All behavior is adaptive. Therefore, all behavior is the best choice you have at the time... according to your needs, the pattern your engaged in, and the secondary gain you are looking for. Remember, your best choice is the most adaptive, not the most positive.

4. Our subjective understanding of the world is not the world: Reality is not what we believe, and/or want it to be. Your subjective beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors have to be put out in the world, and

subject to feedback. This is the only way your perceptions can move closer to reality, and reality is where the answers are. Reality outside your head is where the answers are.

5. There is no failure, there is only feedback: When you act in the world, when you put your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors into the world you'll get feedback. Feedback should not be understood in terms of right or wrong. It should be seen in terms of what is useful, and not useful. Negative feedback is not a failure. It's feedback that you can use to change in a useful way.

6. Genius is a series of predictable behaviors that can be broken down into parts and modeled: This is the essence of the skills-based approach. Anything someone does well, can be emulated. Through emulation, you will learn and become better at what you are doing. Learn to pick good models, and become better at emulating them.

7. When you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got: I think it was Einstein who said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over, and over, and expecting a different result. If you want a different outcome, you have to do something different.

8. The nature of the universe is change: This sounds philosophical, but it's actually very practical. For anything in the universe, if it doesn't learn, and change it will stagnate, weaken, and ultimately die.

9. People have a preferred method of organizing the world: We perceive, organize, and process incoming sensory perception in a

consistent way. By consistent, I mean you have a preferred sensory intake channel: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. You have a preferred intake channel, and a go-to strategy for how you take in and process all sensory information. Your preferred intake channel, as well as your overall strategy is reflected in your language and behavior.

The presuppositions you hold become the structure you build your skills on. If you truly surrender into a presupposition, it's ever present. Everything you do, think, and feel will emerge from that place. Holding useful presuppositions is important because presuppositions quickly become unconscious, and they'll arrive at each moment just before you do.

Because of this, a set of useful presuppositions will do much of the heavy lifting that comes with Changework. This is incredibly important.
The presuppositions of Changework are entirely focused on being useful in real life, rather than theory. They are generalized, universal, and archetypal ideas that focus on the big picture context, rather than individual content.

This is important because big picture content is where all change happens. Context, on the other hand is where the individual facts and details rest. Context is always specific, and unique to the individual, and it's very difficult to change. I remember, when I was struggling with this idea, and I was on the phone with Scott McFall. He said to me, "Dan, our lives are like a set of children's books.

There are only 6 or 7 volumes, and from the big picture, everyone will fit into one of those books.

Find the one they fit in and address what they need to learn." The presuppositions of changework suggest the idea that human change is an art, or craft, rather than a science. As a set of skills, changework is more akin to being a mechanic, or a carpenter, rather than a scientist.

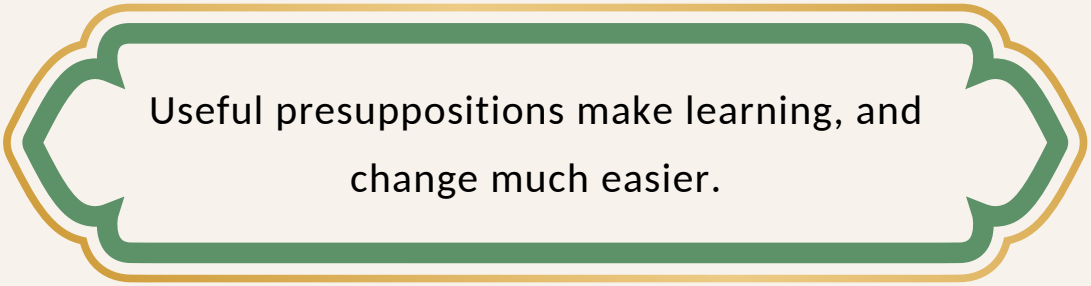
If we consider the situation psychology is in, it seems likely that the focus on science reflects a desire to be right, rather than what might be effective for the client. By this point, I'm hoping that you're at least a little curious about the difference between these two perspectives. These presuppositions serve as the foundation for a set of skills that can be learned by anyone who wants to help others change.

They point to the realization that learning to change others is a skill that is best acquired in a trainer/student relationship. You surrender into the presuppositions, practice the skills, take feedback, learn, change, and practice again until you can display competence. You do the majority of this through emulation of your trainer, even if you "don't understand."

Remember your green lumber lesson. Understanding isn't necessary to do useful work. All science, particularly at the fundamental level is built on the deductive process of understanding the correct pieces, and then arriving at the whole. If you understand the pieces, and put them together in the right way, you arrive at the answer. Then the answer becomes the next piece of the process.

The whole idea is that if you understand the pieces, you understand the whole. changework does not see understanding as necessary. You don't need to understand the internal systems of a car to drive in a useful way. Remember green lumber. You can be effective at something, and not understand the parts/pieces/steps.

Learning Points:



Questions:

1. Think about the presuppositions listed above. Which ones do you already use in your daily life?
2. What negative presuppositions do you hold that seem real to you. Are you willing to discover these assumptions are false?

Action Plan:

Go through the list of presuppositions listed above. Which one would do you think would be most useful to you? See yourself moving through your day tomorrow as if you completely accepted that presupposition. See yourself living your life, engaging with others, and doing your work. Notice how it feels. Practice this in your mind as many ways as you can think of. Pick an interaction or activity today where you could practice this in real life. Now, do it.

17 The structure of change

The next presupposition is the idea that there is a common structure to all human change. This structure is a set of generalized, universal, and archetypal steps/stages that result in a decision followed by action. One of the interesting secrets of life is that virtually all marketing/advertising is presented to you in this universal format.

Any commercial you see, or hear uses is using it. The more successful a advertising/marketing approach, the more direct it's use of this structure. The structure is best presented in Victor Schwab's, 1962 book, How to Write a Good Advertisement.

1. Intensify the pain of the problem.
2. Suggest the solution.
3. Prove the solution.
4. Provide information that will vaccinate against objections and/or remove risk.
5. Ask for commitment.
6. Penalty for not responding.

Take a moment and consider this. Think about the advertising you've seen lately. It's easy to realize that almost all of it is coming to you in a version of this structure. How it's done can vary a bit, but the big picture is consistent. They intensify the pain, by letting you see what you want,

or what you don't have. They suggest the solution by seeing the product in a way that causes you to react emotionally. Then, they prove the solution with social proof...look at how happy she is. Then, they give you information that vaccinates against objections, and/or removes your risk by addressing your concerns before you even realize you're having one.

Don't worry, we can finance you. Then they ask for commitment. You have to call now, or stop by today. And finally, they show you the penalty for not responding. This sale will only last till Saturday. Then it's all tears and regret. This structure has been in development since the first neanderthal traded firewood for a mastodon steak.

Since that first trade, the field of advertising/marketing has become entirely focused on common sense, practical, effective, big picture skills...that work. The reason for this focus is that they HAD to be effective. For human beings to live together, and thrive we had to trade with one another.

And we needed skills that allowed us to do this in an effective way. The development of advertising, and marketing was not superfluous. It was necessary for our survival as individuals, and as a group. That may sound strange, but it's the small scale, person to person, marketing and advertising, that has allowed human beings to survive and thrive over time.

Useful advertising/marketing skills have a proven survival advantage for the individual, and the group. The more effectively we trade with each other, the more we cooperate, the better our economic/social status. And the less likely we are to do horrible things to one another.

This is common sense reality. Advertising/marketing companies understand people. They understand that change happens because of emotion, and is justified later with intellect. They understand the structure that moves people to make a decision and act.

I know you've looked at something, and asked yourself why on earth anyone would ever buy that? The reason it sells is because advertising/marketing people have the skills to get you the right person to make a decision and act. Even if they didn't want to, or might regret it later.

Learning Points:

The structure of change: Intensify the pain, suggest the solution visually and emotionally, prove the solution with third party emotional stories, remove risk, ask for commitment and penalty for not responding.

Questions:



Action Plans:

Next time you have to convince someone to make a decision, use these steps, and notice what happens.

18 It's all about outcomes

Our next presupposition says that if you're going to help someone change in an effective and efficient way, you have to have a well formed outcome. In other words, you have to know where you're going. If you don't have a well formed outcome, you're wandering.

You've accepted money to talk with someone about something, with no idea why you're talking about, or when you'll be done. Without an outcome there's nothing to move toward. There's nothing to indicate progress, or lack of it. If you don't know where you're going, there's no way to hold you, or them, accountable for anything.

No outcome means no accountability. An outcome has to be specific, and well formed. A useful outcome is stated in the positive. It's always a doing. I'm going to do X twice today, or I want to do X and see people smile. An outcome is never a negative, never a not doing. "I don't want to do X anymore" or "I need to stop doing X".

A negative outcome is not well-formed because it will place the client in a space where there is no specific action to follow the decision. How can you take action to not do something? You can't "not" your way to learning and change. A well-formed outcome is always stated in sensory language. It can't be an abstract idea like, "I'll be happier" or "I won't be angry".

It has to be a concrete action. “I will go out twice a week, in public, to meet with my friends.” But also needs to be stated in sensory based language. What will you see, hear and feel when you’re taking action? If you’re going to go out twice a week, what will you see, hear and feel when you’re doing it.

“I will go out with my friends twice a week and I will see them smiling, hear them laugh and I will smile and laugh as well.” This is how we’ll know when you’re making progress toward your outcome, and it will give us the ability to learn and change as we go. Lastly, your outcome can’t be in conflict with your values.

If you want to be a Changeworker, but you value feeling special, being a Changeworker is going to be difficult to achieve. You will never emulate, and practice what you don’t value and respect. This is a more common problem than you think. Very often, we don’t really realize what we value, until we start out on a project that sets up a values conflict.

It’s very common to discover these issues as you go, and you’ll have to resolve them as you go. You will discover your values conflict when you decide on an outcome, agree on the first steps to achieve it, and it becomes increasingly clear that part of you isn’t on board with the project. You procrastinate, you distract and you become frustrated.

You can’t seem to take action, or when you do act you don’t enjoy it. Be aware of situations where you have a clear commitment to an outcome, with strong non-verbal agreement, and then increasing difficulty following through with the steps to achieve it. The necessity of a well-formed outcome goes back to the idea of maturity.

The ability to tolerate frustrated desire alone. You need a well-formed outcome that you can act on, take feedback, learn, change and act again. Frustration emerges when we take action, and reality says “nope”. The way people cope with this experience is to either refuse to take the no, and tolerate the frustrated desire, or never own what they really want.

In either case they’re refusing to be told no. In the first case they’re refusing to take feedback, learn, and change. In the second case they’re refusing to take accountability for what they want. If you never own your outcome and act on it, you never risk being told no. Either of these is a problem because you can’t mature.

Without acting on what you think, and feel, where you have to take feedback, you have no mechanism for learning and change. Maturity is traded for safety and security. A well-formed outcome requires you to take responsibility for what you want, and then act in the world where other people see, and give feedback.

This feedback becomes the basis for learning, and it brings you into relationship with reality. When we learn Changework, it’s our commitment to the outcome that allows the trainer to hold us accountable. When our outcome is challenging, it’s easy to quit. The stress of the situation will fire off your go to responses, and you’ll start to compute, placate, blame or distract.

Being responsible for your outcome allows your trainer to help you accept, learn, change, and mature in a way that moves you toward your goal. The idea that the answers you need lay within is a myth.

The answers never lie within. The answers always lie outside you, in the feedback you get from others and the world. The answers never lie within. Ever.

Learning Points:

All Changework is based on a well-formed outcome.

Questions:

1. Name two goals that you have for yourself, that you have taken responsibility for in a mature way. What actions do you take every day to achieve your goal?
2. How did it look, sound and feel when you experience success?

Action Plans:

Pick a goal that you would like to achieve and write down a well-formed outcome for yourself. Now, name two actions that will take you closer to that outcome. Start those actions today.

19 Sensory intake and processing

Let's go back to the presuppositions of NLP for our next one. You have a preferred sensory channel to process information, and it's either visual, auditory or kinesthetic. You take in, process, consolidate, and recall information primarily through your preferred sensory channel, and this is part of a preferred sensory strategy.

This strategy will start with your preferred channel, and move through a set of steps/stages that may include other channels. You will use this strategy to process all of your experience. You may have some contexts where you use a different strategy, or a traumatic response that has a different strategy, but beyond these exceptions, you will use your preferred strategy compulsively.

As an example, my preferred information processing channel is auditory. I listen closely, and then I process what I hear by talking to myself in my head. I will continue to listen, and talk to myself until I reach a logical conclusion that "makes sense." The way I know it makes sense is because it feels good kinesthetically. I listen,

I talk to myself in my head until I reach a conclusion that I physically "feel good about". Now I can act. If I can't reach a conclusion that feels good, I will not act. There are two important points to notice here.

First, we have a preferred sensory intake channel, and then a complete strategy for processing information. Second, our information processing strategy is a big part of how we make decisions. We will go into this in more detail later, but our decision-making strategy will always favor the way we prefer to process information.

The important point to notice, is that how you process information can make it easy, or difficult, to make a decision. If you prefer the auditory channel, and the information available is visual, it will be difficult for you to make a decision and act.

For instance, when I'm presented with visual information, or required to visualize information, it's more challenging for me to process it because I'm auditory first. I rely on hearing words, and then thinking about it in words.

If I'm given primarily visual information, I have to be able to translate it into verbal information, or at least give the visual information useful verbal descriptions. As you can imagine this is difficult, and at times impossible. If I can't easily translate into my preferred channel, I will not kinesthetically feel good about any part of my experience.

This means I will not be able to comfortably make a decision, and act on it. The visual/auditory/kinesthetic, or VAK model is a useful, big picture way to represent how you process information, and then create an internal map of reality. Since you can't take in reality in a complete way, you use your preferred sensory strategy to create a map of how reality works. You may believe that you're meeting each unique moment as a conscious, cognitive entity whose actions are specific to that moment,

but you would be wrong. All thinking, reasoning, and cognitive processing is secondary to your habitual, compulsive, and unconscious strategy. So here is the heuristic. Everyone has a preferred channel of sensory perception, and a strategy to process information, as well as make decisions.

If you can see the strategy the other person is using, it's much easier to help them make a decision and act. If they can act, they can learn, change, and move toward their well formed outcome.

Learning Points:

All information processing is sensory based, and you have a preferred sensory intake channel, as well as a preferred strategy that you use to process all information.

Questions:

1. Think of two or three people that you interact with regularly. What is their primary sensory intake channel?
2. What impact does their preferred sensory intake have on their interactions with others? Does it make them more, or less effective?

Action Plan:

- In every conversation, start to use all of your senses intentionally. When you interact with others, start to talk with them about all of their sensory experience rather than just your preferred channel.
- Where you might have said, “Does that sound good to you?”, you can add, “Can you see what I mean?”.
- Try to add more sensory based information to every conversation. Notice what changes.

20 Metaprograms & more about strategies

This idea of strategies is incredibly important in Changework. We recognize the idea that our behavior is adaptive, and organized around generalized needs. We construct useful habits of operation, that over time that develop into strategies that allow us to manage our stress, meet our needs, and survive.

With practice and emotional weight, these patterns become functional parts of our neurophysiology that operate unconsciously and compulsively. Because so much of our life experience is archetypal, it follows that we would share common, generalized strategies that we use to cope. Changework understands this idea through the NLP concept of meta programs.

A meta program is a strategy for the generalized, universal, and archetypal functions of human life. Like all aspects of Changework, metaprograms are not individualized, and they're not interested in what is correct. Their focus is the useful adaptation to stress and survival.

Understanding these meta programs will help you to understand the person, and then move them toward their outcome. The following is a list of the meta programs that are important in Changework.

Chunking up and chunking down

Most people in the helping professions have heard about the magic number 7, plus or minus 2. This idea suggests that our capacity for processing information is about seven pieces, plus or minus two. When presented with information outside this limiting function, we struggle to process, encode and recall it. Changework takes this rule, and extends it to include the idea of chunking up or chunking down.

When processing information, people have a meta program that prefers chunking up into fewer generalized pieces of information, or chunking down to more specific pieces of information. All of us have a preferred method of processing that's consistent over time, but like anything else there can be some contextual exceptions.

Think about how you process information for a moment. When presented with a problem to solve, do you look for all the facts that you feel are important, and then use these facts to reason and problem solve? Or, do you generalize the problem to other problems like it, see how you solved those, and then try that behavior again?

Whether people chunk up or down is important. Chunking up is a generalized, big picture strategy that presupposes no uniqueness in the issue. Useful past coping by yourself, or even others, can be used again, and tailored on the go.

On the other hand, chunking down into narrative, fact and detail presupposes specialness. It presupposes that your issue is specific to you, and to this instance. Chunking down is always a first step toward attempting to reasoning your way out of your unique problem.

The assumptions of Changework tell you that a focus on the facts, and specifics of your experience, is a form of specialness that will always make change difficult. The more special you are, and the more you attempt to “figure it out”, the further you’ll be from a decision followed by action.

It’s important it is to know how you’re processing information, so that you can learn to chunk upward into the context of the problem, rather than chunk down into content. Change happens in the context… never in the content.

Internally checked or externally checked

Are you internally checked or externally checked? When you want information or feedback regarding the usefulness or un-usefulness of your thoughts, feelings and behavior, do you go to the world around you and take feedback from others, or do you talk to yourself in your head and try to reason your way to the answer?

Seeking out, and taking feedback from others and the world is being externally checked. It’s a sign of maturity, and reality-based thinking. Being internally checked means that you fear the scrutiny of others, so you withdraw from reality and decide the usefulness or un-usefulness of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors yourself.

This is problematic, because it’s you talking to you about you, and then you “figuring out” what whether you’re right about you…without ever checking with the reality around you. This isn’t maturity. This is a guarantee that change will be difficult.

Motivation

What motivates you to make a decision and act on it? Is your first instinct to move away from pain, or are you inclined to move toward pleasure? What will cause you to feel a significant drive to take action? At a deep level, do you want to avoid guilt, pain, and loss? Or, do you want to access greed, exclusivity, and gain?

What motivates you to act is incredibly important. If change is your goal, it's useful if your motivation strategy is working for you. If you're motivated away from pain, and I'm asking to you act because you'll make more money, you'll act slowly, if at all.

This is because you don't value the process, or the goal. Remember, this is a meta program, a generalized, universal, and archetypal strategy. It's a preference in your nervous system that supports action. The same point is true in reverse.

If you're motivated toward pleasure, toward greed, exclusivity and gain, you won't be strongly motivated by the possibility of pain. I could intensify your possible pain for not acting, and your response would not be immediate action. To get you to make a decision and act, it is very useful to be moving toward what motivates you.

We have a preferred strategy that motivates us to take action. We are motivated toward pleasure or away from pain. Another way to see this is that we are motivated away from guilt, pain, and loss, or toward greed, exclusivity, and gain. If we're trying to make a decision, and take action, and the motivation is not consistent with our strategy, the process becomes more challenging.

Sorting Information

When you encounter new information, do you sort it by association or distinction? In other words, when you encounter new information or experience, do you first perceive how it's like what you've already seen/done/believe, or do you first perceive how it's different from what you've already seen/done/believe? Another way to see this, is to ask if you sort information by agreement or disagreement.

When you encounter new information or experience, do you first see what you agree with, and how it's like other information and experience you've seen in the past, or do you first see what you disagree with, and how it's different from other information and experience you've seen in the past?

This is an important meta program for many reasons. To sort by association, or agreement is to build on what you already have. You take all new information as useful learning, and immediately use it to move toward a goal or outcome. If it's useful you keep it, if it's not you set it aside.

Sorting by association is an archetypal, common-sense way to engage with reality. It's a focus on consistent useful learning by action and experience. This fits well into the assumptions and presuppositions of Changework. To sort by distinction or disagreement is to focus on specifics and details.

It starts with the idea that your experience is different than what's presented. Sorting by distinction will fuel a sense of difference, and it

tends to engage your reasoning process, and reinforce your sense of uniqueness. This is not useful to learning through action. This is an internal attempt to safely determine what's correct, by excluding all learning/experience that you don't already agree with.

This strategy doesn't fit well into the assumptions and presuppositions of Changework.

Self or other

The final meta program we'll discuss has to do with your primary focus. Are you focused on yourself, or on the other person. When you're interacting in the world, do you focus on your thoughts, feelings and behaviors, or do you focus on the other person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors? Knowing what you're focused on is important because Changework assumes you should be focused on the other person… always.

If you're interacting with someone, and you're internal, talking/thinking/processing/rationalizing to yourself, this means that you're trying to find a way to feel ok. You're trying to think your way to an experience that will meet your core needs in that moment. If this is happening, then the first person in the relationship that has to be helped is you.

This is not Changework. Your first and only task as a Changeworker, is to move your client toward their outcome. You have to be mature enough, that you don't need to have your needs met during this process.

You should be able to tolerate your experience, whatever it might be, and focus on the outcome of the person across from you. From a universal, generalized, and archetypal perspective, this is an important idea. Maybe the most important idea in Changework.

If you want to help others effectively and efficiently, you have to be others focused. If you're quick to dismiss this for whatever reason, stop. You need to spend some time with this idea. It's very easy, particularly in the helping professions, to get your needs met at the front end of any interaction.

This should make you curious, because many of us go into the field with strong needs for approval, admiration, sympathy, understanding, or even martyrdom. If we can't tolerate our experience, alone, we will consciously and unconsciously be working to get our needs met.

This is what we mean when we talk about counter-transference. If you can't tolerate your experience, you will need to have your needs met, BEFORE you can attend to anyone else in a useful way.

Learning Points:

Metaprograms are strategies that we use to adapt to universal aspects of human experience

Questions:

1. Think of one or two activities you engage in that you really enjoy. What meta programs are you using during the activities you're thinking about. Would it be useful to change any of your metaprograms?
2. What if you took the meta programs from the activities that you enjoyed, and used them in an activity you don't enjoy? What do you think would happen?

Action Plan:

Think of a situation or activity that you don't enjoy. Now think of your favorite activity and the meta programs you use when you do it. Now see yourself engaged in the activity you don't enjoy using the meta programs from your favorite activity. See yourself having a different, more positive experience. Now, think about the situation or activity you didn't enjoy as much. What's different now?

21 Big picture, values & beliefs

Values

Let's take a look at the values, and beliefs you'll need to surrender into, if you want to do Changework. These values and beliefs provide the big picture structure needed to see the context, not the content, of the problem, as well as the outcome. In our context, we're not individual facts or details.

Rather, we're archetypes, themes, metaphors and universal human experiences. This is important because change happens in the context, never in the content. Holding these values and beliefs is necessary if you want to work in the universal, generalized, and archetypal context of the change process. Let's talk about values first. Changework is based on a maturity model.

The idea that we need to be able to tolerate your experience alone, without acting out to get our way. We are supposed to learn this lesson when we're young, and our parents tell us no. Think for a moment... what do you do when someone in authority tells you "No"?

Do you surrender and realize that you'll be fine, regardless of how much you may have wanted a "yes"? Do you realize that if another person tells you "No", they may have reasons for this that you simply don't see?

Or, do you decide your right, their wrong, and then spin, manipulate, push, argue or otherwise act out to get your way? Learning a mature response to authority when we're young, is incredibly important. I have two children and I noticed early how this works.

First, I would say "No," and they would act out to get what they wanted. We had crying, tantrums and general misbehavior. Then, over time, they learned to acknowledge the limitation, and accept it. Whew… phase one complete. But in their heads, they would be telling themselves that I don't understand, or I'm wrong, or I'm being unjust, or some such.

Finally, over time, they learned to accept the no, surrender, and feel ok. They learned to tolerate frustrated desire, alone. Changework values the idea that you have to know how to mind authority. You have to be able to hear "No". You have to be able to take feedback from the context around you, accept it comfortably, and take action.

Then, and this is the important part of your learning, you need to be able to comfortably follow up with authority, take more feedback, and act again. Rather than acting out through computing, placating, blaming, or distracting in an effort to get your way. Maturity is the only way learning happens.

You cannot expect to learn, if you have to have your way whenever you feel stressed. If you believe that you get to take in what's being offered, go home, think about it, decide what you agree with, and what you're going to do, don't expect to learn much. To do Changework, or learn anything you don't already know, you have to surrender into minding an authority figure. You need to have a mature relationship with authority

to learn, and so will the people you're trying to help. If you can't handle this, your clients wont either. Another value in Changework is that you don't triangulate. Whether it's teacher/student, or Changeworker/client, a useful relationship has only two people in it.

Two people leveling, and dealing directly with each other. Spouses, partners, friends, and significant others can't be in the teaching relationship. More importantly, other trainers can't be triangulated into the relationship. Tolerating frustrated desire, while being a student can be a challenge. One of the ways we act out to relieve stress, is to bring another person into the relationship that will tell us what we want to hear.

You can't do this as a student, and you can't have your clients doing it either. Learning depends on a leveled, one on one relationship with the trainer. You can't seek out other teachers, supporters, friends or allies that will comment on, or otherwise get engaged in what you're doing. This is a triangle, and when it's done, it's always an attempt by the student, or the client, to avoid something they don't want to do.

A triangle, any triangle, is an attempt to act out. It's an attempt to get your way. It's an attempt to escape maturity. To learn anything, particularly when you're using emulation, you have to believe that what you're being taught is the most important thing you're doing during the time that you're learning.

You have to believe that learning to tolerate your experience, alone, without acting out is the core of your success. Changework is challenging to learn.

You will experience anxiety, fear, anger, and sadness. Learning to tolerate your experience alone will demand your undivided attention. There is no halfway. You'll believe at times that you have a better way to do it, or your idea would work better than what you're being taught.

This happens, its normal. But there's a point here, that I would invite you to consider. If you're learning from a Changework trainer, that person has in their office, piles of testimonials from students and clients stating that the trainer changed their life in some way. There are trainers with many hundreds of testimonials from students and clients.

So, quick question, how many testimonials do you have stating that a person engaged in a change process with you, that ended with them willing to tell everyone on earth that you changed their life and how? If your response to this is to tell me that you don't ask your clients to write testimonials, that's cool.

Another quick question, do you give your clients their money back if they don't achieve their outcome? Changework trainers do. If you don't have proof that what you do works, maybe it would be useful to listen to the someone who does. You'll have questions, doubts, and no shortage of confusion.

But you have to realize that the answers you're looking for will be found in other students, your trainer and in your practice of the skills. The answers you're looking for are always outside you, they're never inside you. If you believe your situation is different, you'll act out. You'll rationalize why you get to avoid, or deny some aspect of the learning, feedback, and practice.

This is where you're leaning will stop. The last value I want to talk about here is the idea that you cannot be a relativist in any way. A relativist believes that everyone's opinions and beliefs are equal, and must be respected.

If you believe that the process of change is relative, you're lost. And so are the people who come to you for help. If you believe that you can help someone change starting with the assumption that their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors must be respected, I wish you the best. Change must start with the assumption that their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, are part of the problem.

If your client, or student's attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors were useful, they would have changed already, and they wouldn't be sitting across from you. You don't get to have a problem, be accountable for it, acknowledge that you need help, and then in your head tell yourself you get to judge what's useful and correct.

You can't have it both ways. You cannot ask for help, and then believe your perception is as useful as the person you asked to help you. There has to be a teacher and a student. There has to be a map that gets you where you're going. If the student, or client's behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and values are as useful as the trainers, then they don't need a trainer.

They should be able to get to their outcome, and/or develop effective skills, all on their own. Then, they should be able to demonstrate this in their everyday life. To be a student, you have to surrender into and acknowledge that you don't know, and you need help.

You have to level, and take responsibility for yourself. After you acknowledge that you need help, you have to ask for it. This is sign of maturity. You don't get to cling to your fancy ideas about yourself, and your abilities without demonstrating competence. If you want to learn, or you want to help someone learn, this is how it has to work.

Learning Points:

1. To learn and change, you must have a mature relationship with authority.
2. To help another person learn, and change you cannot be a relativist about the process.

Questions:

1. Think about a time when you were trying to learn something and you were told you were wrong. How did you react to that and did it help you to learn?
2. Have you ever tried to help someone learn something only to find that they believe their perceptions are as useful as yours… regardless of what reality suggests? Were you able to help them learn?

Action Plan:

- Seek out an opportunity to learn something new. Before you learn, see yourself in your mind seeing, hearing and feeling yourself accepting the learning easily and comfortably. Now go learn. Notice the impact this has on your learning.
- When you're learning something new, take a moment and thank your teacher for the time and help. Notice how it feels to do this.

22 Beliefs - The Satir Model

The **first** belief we should discuss is the Satir Model. Virginia Satir was a pioneer of family therapy who served as one of the two primary models for the development of NLP. However, I think it's more accurate to say that her work is the genius at the heart of NLP.

Without modeling Virginia Satir, the people who developed NLP would have little other than a list of language patterns to talk about. The real heart of NLP is made up of the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of Virginia and to a lesser extent, those of Milton Erickson. Virginia was a genius at the change process.

She was able to accomplish amazing things, with an ease and efficiency that those around her wanted to emulate. She taught workshops throughout her life, and wrote several books, two of which hold the core elements of her work. These books were called, Peoplemaking (1972) and The New Peoplemaking (1988).

It was Satir that introduced the idea of leveling. Again, leveling is when the words you say match the emotions you feel right now. It's when you're being honest with yourself about what you're experiencing emotionally. If we're all honest with each other, most of us don't do this

very often because it's difficult. Owning who we are in front of others makes us feel vulnerable, and insecure. We simply don't level easily, or often. Satir understood this vulnerability. She understood that leveling is a risk to our self-esteem.

She talked about four ways that we avoid leveling, and protect our self-esteem. The first, she called computing. Take a second and stand up. Place one foot slightly ahead of the other, and then cross your arms. Stand up tall, and put your best judgmental look on your face.

Like you're looking down your nose at someone. Now say out loud, "If one were to analyze this one would find…" Say it one more time, like you mean it. See how it feels. Does it feel familiar to you? Look in a mirror as you do this. Have you seen this look on other people?

The computer protects their self-esteem by not feeling. They become distant, aloof, and analyze what's happening rather than leveling into the experience of it. They talk about what's happening, and try to "understand it".

This prevents them from having to level, and allows them to feel smart in the process. Take a moment and consider this. Do you do this yourself? Do you analyze rather than level? Have you had the experience of having someone compute when they're communicating with you? How did that feel?

The **second** way we avoid leveling is to placate. The placater will tell you what you want to hear, and keep you happy rather than level with you. They'll try to please you, and care for you, rather than experience their

own emotions. Take a moment, and get down on one knee. Put your left hand over your heart, and hold your right hand out in front of you palm up. Now say out loud, “Whatever you want, I’m just here for you.”

Say it one more time, with meaning. How does that feel? Have you ever placated someone rather than leveling with them? Have you ever been placated by someone?

The **third** way to avoid leveling is to blame. The blamer doesn’t have to level because it’s not their fault… it’s yours. You did this. You made this situation. They have nothing to level about. Now stand up. Put one foot forward.

Reach your hand out, and point it at something. Lean forward… get aggressive. Now say, “This is all your fault.” Say it again. How does this one feel? Ever done this to anyone? Ever had it done to you?

The final way to avoid leveling is the distractor. A distractor will do, think or feel anything that comes along, rather than level. There will always be something interesting, significant, or shocking, that takes their attention from the situation they’re in, and they’ll try to take you with them.

They’ll change the subject, have an emergency, fall in love, pick a fight, anything to distract from the present moment experience. Stand up, and cross your legs while standing. Point your right hand up and your left hand down. Turn your head to the left and stick out your tongue. Distractors don’t necessarily say anything, they just do anything and everything to avoid leveling.

Now that you have a sense of leveling, and the ways you avoid it, let's talk about a couple other aspects of the Satir model. We come back to the idea that we're more alike than not. Our behavior is adaptive, and we function through habitual, patterned responses.

These points also apply to the Satir model in two ways. First, is the notion that you have a preferred stance you use to protect your self-esteem. The second is your pattern of moving through the other stances of the Satir model, if your initial response isn't effective.

Let me give you an example. My initial response to stress is to compute. When I'm presented with a situation, and I don't want to level, I'll analyze what's happening, process it, think about it, and talk to myself about what I think. This allows me to dissociate from the experience, feel smart and protect my self-esteem.

This is my preferred method of coping when I'm under stress. You have a preferred coping position as well. Take a moment and think about it. If you don't know, call someone who knows you well, and explain the Satir model to them. I bet you a dollar they can tell you what you do first. When I compute, and my stress level goes down I'm done.

This is often the case. My preferred coping stance is preferred because I'm really good at it. This stance has been improved, sharpened and nuanced to the point that it can handle 95% of what happens to me very quickly. When I compute, and the stress continues or even increases, I move on to placating. I stop computing, and get in touch with my emotions.

At least that's how it might seem to you. I focus on you, and what you want. I say and do whatever I think you want me to say and do so that you believe we're on the same sheet of music. This is usually pretty effective. I mean after all, I giving you want you want… right?

Not really. I'm just acting like I think you want me to act. I'm not leveling, but I want you to feel like I am. If you can tell I'm not sincere, and you call me on it, well, now were on to blaming. I've had enough of this, and I'm going to point my finger at you and tell you that I'm done with whatever you've got going on.

I will bark enough that you'll back off, and my stress level will decrease. If you back off, I'll reengage, placate you, and we can be friends again. Then we can go back to the status quo. I may throw some distractions in here and there if I think it'll work on you. I've never found distraction to work well for me unless it's something you can't call me on.

I'll distract by having some external problem that's big enough that you just have to cut me some slack. This is hard to do, and it feels obvious to me. I always end up feeling stupid when I distract so I don't do it a lot. If I'm distracting you, it's because I'm sure I'm going to get away with it, or, I feel trapped in some way.

When it's all said and done I usually land in one of two places. First, I feel justified, have an increased sense of control, and my stress level decreases. Second, I feel guilty and ashamed of my behavior, and I return to computing to deal with my feelings. This cycle will continue until I have to level. Yup, it's that ridiculous.

Changework holds that unless the person you're talking to is leveling, nothing useful is happening. You may want to change, you may want a specific outcome, but I know that leveling is going to be difficult for you. Your need to cope with the vulnerability you feel will move you right into the Satir model.

If I allow you to compute, placate, blame or distract, there's no way you're going to get the outcome you desire. If we're not leveling with each other from the very start, we're not really doing anything.

Learning Points:

If you're not leveling, you're computing, placating, blaming or distracting.

Questions:

1. When you feel stressed, do you level?
2. If you don't level, what do you do? How does this impact your interaction with others?
3. If you leveled, would you be more successful at achieving your outcomes?

Action Plan:

Think about the interactions you have every day where it would be useful to level. Pick one and see yourself leveling in your mind. See yourself comfortably and easily leveling and having a positive experience. See yourself finding several ways to comfortably do this. Do this in real life, and notice what happens.

23 Core needs

It's time to talk about shadow needs, or what is sometimes called your "prove it" strategy. This belief structure builds on the assumptions that you're not special, and that your behavior is adaptive. But more importantly, it builds on the assumption that we are all moving through the same world, having the same experiences, and coping in very similar ways.

This means that when we talk about shadow needs, the list is going to be short. People are people are people, and life is life. The needs that organize human experience, are going to be universal, generalized, and archetypal. Your shadow need is your preferred feeling of ok-ness. It's the ok-ness you prefer to experience as a base line.

Each of us has a primary need, or maybe two, and these needs organize our unconscious constellation of perception in a way that shapes our particular map of reality. All of your behavior, beliefs, attitudes and values emerge from this map to ensure that your need(s) is correct, justified, and gets met.

This is the idea of the shadow need. It lurks in the shadows, and organizes what you perceive, which guides what you do. You can also see this belief structure as a "prove it" strategy. Our behavior is a direct reflection of what we're trying to prove about ourselves.

We behave, think and feel the way we do, to prove something to the world. We are proving to the world, that we're ok, so the world will give us the feedback that validates our ok-ness. We want feedback from others indicating that we are what we need to be.

If I act as if I have what I need, the world will treat me as if I have it. This is proof that I'm ok. This is what we mean by "prove it" strategy. Changework uses a heuristic of five shadow needs: freedom, security, competency, belonging and self-expression. Freedom is the need to be free.

To have control of your life, thoughts, feelings, and choices. To focus on what you want to focus on, and not feel limited by others. Security is the need to feel safe, and stable above all else. Security is the felt kinesthetic sense that you're safe, and can manage what's happening in your life.

Competency is the need to feel intelligent/smart. It's the need for your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to be right. Belonging is the need to feel like you are part of something larger than yourself. To be a member of a place, thing or group. Finally, we have self-expression.

This is the need to display your beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and values to the world, and have them witnessed, and validated. When others see you, you feel significant, heard and understood. Most people have one primary need that organizes their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. As a result, everything you think, feel and do works to ensure that this need is met.

If you don't perceive that your need is met, if you don't feel ok, if you're unable to prove to the world that you have what you need, you'll experience stress. Then you'll double down on getting this need met. The way you do this will be a strategy, a movement through stages/states, that is habitual, compulsive, and unconscious.

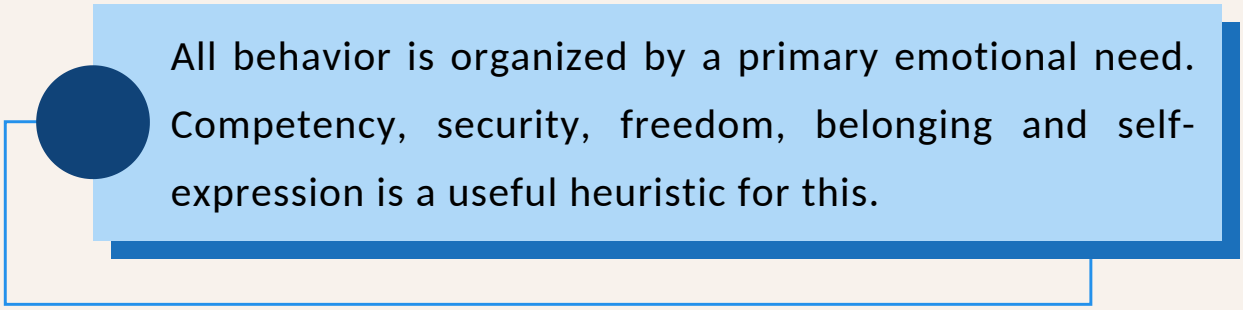
If your core need is not being met, this is no time for new and creative responses. Understanding this heuristic is a universal, generalized, and archetypal way to understand the behavior of others. If you can see the core need/needs of the other person, it's profoundly easier to see the context, and then to change it.

The details, the facts, the specific narrative ceases to matter. When you can see what that person needs, and what they are trying to prove, then you understand what they need to learn. If you can see what they need, what they're trying to prove, several things become clear at once.

First, you have a useful understanding of why they're doing what they're doing. Second, you can now ask yourself, "What experiences did they have/not have in the past, that would have caused this need to emerge?" This gives you a common-sense window into where this person has been, and what may have happened to them.

Finally, you can ask yourself, "Where will this need, and the strategies around it, take this person tomorrow?" This gives you a common-sense window into this person's future.

Learning Points:



Questions:

1. What need organizes your behavior most of the time?
2. What actions do you repeatedly use to make sure your need is met?
3. Does this help you achieve your outcomes? Does it get you what you want?

Action Plan:

Pick a useful moment, and level over your need with a person you feel safe with. Simply state out loud what you need, and how it impacts your choices. What changes after you do this?

24 Perceived crime

Our next belief comes from the work of Edgar Barnett and his book Unlock Your Mind and Be Free (1979). This is the idea of a perceived crime. Many people grow up feeling, at a deep level that they've done something wrong, or they themselves are wrong in some way.

This crime is constructed in the mind of the child when they don't understand their experience, and are struggling to adapt to the adult situations they find themselves in. The child comes to believe, based on their internal processing of the information available, that they've done something wrong.

This belief may be based in reality, and it may be completely constructed. Barnett outlines three universal, generalized, and archetypal perceived crimes. The crime of gender, the crime of anger, and the crime of existence. The crime of gender is the perception that you were born the wrong gender.

That your parents, family, and others wanted a child of the other gender, but they got you instead. The crime of anger is the perception that you're bad or wrong any time you express anger, regardless of the situation. Finally, the crime of existence. This is the perception that your very existence is wrong. The fact that you're here is a problem, and it's your fault.

We come to accept these crimes when we're very young. We take the information we're given, and we adapt to it in the best way we can. We make an effort to understand, and then try to live our lives in a way that allows us to manage the problem as we perceive it.

For many people, they come to feel that their gender, their anger, or their very existence is a problem, and over time they develop a strategy that allows them to cope with this perception in a way the feels effective to them.

The strategies we use to cope with a crime can take many forms. Some people respond by moving away from others and protecting themselves. Others move toward people, placate them, and gain a sense of acceptance. A perceived crime, even when entirely constructed, will become an organizing feature of your behavior.

It will become an organizing feature of what you think, feel and do. Knowing whether a person feels that they've committed the crime of gender, anger or existence is important. If you believe, not that you've done wrong, but that that you are wrong, your outcomes will be difficult to achieve.

Learning Points:

Edgar Barnett outlined three perceived crimes: Gender, existence and anger (negative emotion). These are universal, generalized, and archetypal beliefs that will become core organizing features of behavior.

Questions:

1. Are you holding onto a perceived crime, or do you know someone who is?
2. What limitations do you think this belief causes in the life of this person?

Action Plan:

If you think you may have a perceived crime, make a list of three reasons why you believe this. Now, go inside and see yourself as a child. Tell yourself you understand how, and why the child in you might have believed these reasons.

Thank your child-self for trying to protect, and take care of you. Tell that part of you that you know it was doing what it thought was best for you. Now ask that part of you if they are willing to find three new and creative ways to feel different about these beliefs.

Thank that part for working on this with you. What do you notice?

25 Compulsion & more about secondary gain

Let's go back to an interesting feature of human beings that we've already talked about. We believe we understand ourselves, and have control over our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, when in reality, we don't. The vast majority of what we think, feel, and do in the world is part of a short list of unconscious, habitual, and compulsive strategies that allow us to usefully adapt to stress and survive.

We're not moving through the world responding to each experience with unique thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We're a nervous system in the world, functioning with the goal of successful adaptation and survival. Our nervous system operates as a collection of primary strategies that are used to adapt to universal, problems/challenges.

These strategies are made of a sequence of steps/stages, each of which can have its own beliefs, values, behaviors and attitudes. Each step/stage can have its' own memories, learnings and behaviors. These strategies emerge from our learned experience, as well as our biology. Both nature and nurture, have a roll in the process.

The more adaptive the strategy, the more it will be repeated, and through effective repetition, it will become habitual, and compulsive.

As you've been taking this in, you may have felt the desire to defend your "unique" experience. "But what about me, I experienced (fill in the blank)." You may believe that your experience, and/or your response to that experience is unique and singular in some way. After all, nobody else, has experienced exactly what happened to you... right? Not really.

The only uniqueness in human experience, is in our perceived narrative of that experience. If you step away from your individual facts/details, you're just a human being responding to one of the universal, generalized and archetypal challenges of this life.

There's nothing unique about your anger, overwhelm, confusion, fear, pain, suffering, or your response to it. The only uniqueness in all this, is what you chose to believe, after the fact. For a moment, think about human beings as you would a cell phone.

We all have the same basic operating system, the human nervous system designed to construct, host and manage a finite collection of apps that help us cope with stress and survive. This operating system's only job is to efficiently launch the app that will achieve adaptation to the moment we are in. Our basic operating system is completely invisible/unconscious.

And it includes an app that allows to believe that all this is conscious. The only job this app has is to construct, and maintain a narrative that explains your behavior to you, and to the world... after that behavior has occurred. Because we're a nervous system using a short list of universal, generalized and archetypal patterned responses/strategies to adapt to

stress and survive, the majority of our behavior will be unconscious, habitual and compulsive. If a behavior allows us to usefully adapt, even if the outcome has negative consequences on the surface, we'll use it again. We'll respond to all generalized problems in the same unconscious, habitual and compulsive strategy.

Over time, with additional experience, our strategies become more sophisticated adding or subtracting steps/stages in a way that allows us to optimize our responses to best meet our needs. The nervous systems organization around adaptation, and survival makes us compulsive by nature.

We're compulsive in the sense that our unconscious responses are consistent and immediate. We'll use the same strategy for the same generalized experience of stress each time it occurs. Even if the outcome seems subjectively, and/or objectively negative.

No matter how negative it appears, if it allows us to lower our stress level, and maintain our self-esteem, it's a win to the nervous system. If the strategy reduces stress, and allows us to adapt usefully, notice I didn't say positive/correct/right, we'll use that strategy again. What drives compulsion is the neurophysiology involved.

To survive, we must be able to usefully regulate/manage the nervous systems experience of stress. To function effectively in the world, the nervous system requires effective adaptation to stress. We must have the tools to effectively, and efficiently, mange the stress we experience. And again, not matter how negative it might appear, if the nervous

system can manage stress, and maintain self-esteem, that function is useful. Our experience of effectively managing a stressful situation, includes the ability of the unconscious mind to perceive a win. When the adaptation is obviously useful, the payoff is usually the positive emotions that emerge from success.

We feel happy, relieved, proud, satisfied, and more confident. If the adaptation reduces stress, but results in a negative experience, we'll need to construct/organize our perception in a way that makes this event feel like a win. When we have to construct a win, we call this secondary gain.

Secondary gain is the reason a person will continue a behavior/strategy that causes them recurrent, negative experience. Why would they continue to behave in a way that results in what appears to be an objectively negative outcome?

Why would they continue to: smoke, eat, resent, hate, dislike, be mean to, isolate, do nothing, avoid, give in, allow that, or do that when the results seem to be obviously negative? Part of the answer to this is compulsion, but why would you continue a response that maintains your own suffering? Why isn't there any self-correction?

Compulsion is driven by our nervous system, and it's need for adaptation and survival. It's also driven by the usefulness of secondary gain. Immediate adaptation is about the effective reduction of stress. This could be many things but usually it's a kinesthetic, and emotional sense of ok-ness. You no longer feel the internal experience of being

insecure, frightened, stressed, worried, afraid, cold, wet, etc. Immediate adaptation to stress is focused on somatic, and emotional perception. Think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Physical, Safety, Love/Belonging, Esteem, Self-Actualization. The most basic needs are felt in the body, and in our emotions.

This takes you back into the idea of heuristics or meta programs. There are several meta programs that help you better understand what's driving a compulsive behavior. The first to consider, is the general principle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the idea of priority. Physical, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization.

When you look at the strategy, what need is being served? What does this need suggest about their priorities at that moment? Let's look at this same idea another way. There's another heuristic of general human needs that Changework finds useful. This is nutrition, sleep, sexuality/romance, and adventure.

This is a model that has proven itself useful when dealing with compulsive behaviors such as eating. Compulsive eating is very often a stand in for an unmet need: nutrition, sleep, sexuality/romance or adventure (compelling future). Food is the way that we can meet a need that we otherwise aren't fulfilling.

If we were living in a way that brought us the nutrition, sleep, sexuality/romance or adventure that would meet our needs, the compulsive need to eat could change.You can look at the same situation a bit differently again. When you see the strategy, ask yourself, 'What's missing?"

What universal, generalized, archetypal life experience is not available: physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual. What generalized human requirement is not being fulfilled? What are we not experiencing in our life that leaves us with a sense of lack?

If we perceive that we need something, and we don't live in a way that meets that need, we'll be compelled to meet it in a way that is often secondary, and less useful. When you talk about changing a strategy, leveling is where you have to start.

If you level with yourself, take accountability for your thoughts, feelings, and behavior, and then engage in behavior that would directly move you toward your outcome, the compulsion would start to fade. All that would remain is the habitual aspects of the strategy, and these are relatively easy to change if you're taking accountability for what you think, feel, and do.

Without leveling you'll continue to be compelled to behave in a way that lowers your stress, regardless of the experience that goes with it. Your nervous system will always prefer to lower stress, and survive in a way that's consistent with your beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors.

The nervous system has a map of reality, and it wants to lower stress and survive in a way that matches the map. This means that your nervous system, you unconscious, is trying to adapt successfully, and trying to get its way at the same time. You are moving through the world, trying to adapt and survive, and you have a hidden agenda regarding how you prefer to do this.

In changework, we look at hidden agendas through the lens of the seven deadly sins. When observing a compulsive behavior, you ask yourself, “What is the hidden agenda here?” Does the compulsion suggest an agenda of wrath, greed, pride, sloth, lust, gluttony or envy?

The seven deadly sins are a great heuristic to understand the reality of universal, generalized, and archetypal human behavior goals. All compulsive behavior leads to a problematic loop, and the only way out is leveling. The compulsive behavior is being driven by an agenda that the individual is not, or not entirely, aware of.

Without a levelled accountability for what’s actually happening, we’re left in a pattern of adaptation that will decrease stress, but never change the strategy in a useful way. Your stress may decrease temporarily, and it may not, but you will always get the secondary gain that comes with getting your way.

As long as you get your way, no matter what happens, it’s a win for the nervous system.

Learning Points:

The majority of your behavior in the world is part of a strategy that you developed to adapt to stress. The strategies you use are unconscious, habitual, and compulsive.

Questions:

1. Think about your past, how do you cope with stress?
2. What actions do you engage in over and over?
3. What experiences do you have over and over?

Action Plan:

Consider a behavior you engage in that might be compulsive. Level with another person about what you do, and how it feels to do it. Notice what is different after you do this.

26 The skills

We need to begin this section with a clear understanding of two things. First, you can't learn to do Changework by reading this book. If you thought it would be possible to read this, and take away what you need to do the work, I hope you understand now why this is impossible. Changework is a set of skills that can only be learned in a relationship with someone who has surrendered into, and taken on, the assumptions, values, beliefs and behaviors we've discussed.

Changework is not information, or knowledge that you get to consider, and then decide what you agree with. The only way to learn Changework, is to surrender into a relationship with a trainer, and practice until you can display competence. That's it. Buy the ticket, take the ride. There're no exceptions to this.

Secondly, the practice of Changework is built on a foundation of maturity. The ability to tolerate frustrated desire alone. A large part of maturity is the ability to be accountable to another person. To level with another person about what you don't know, or can't do, and ask them for help.

Then, surrender into the belief that you have to do what you're asked to do in order to learn. The process of being accountable to an external reality, taking feedback, and working through your frustration until you can tolerate it... alone... is the point.

For many people, particularly people in the clinical or helping professions, there is a strong desire to avoid the accountability that maturity requires. The profession has accommodated this fear by ensuring that no one has to take any real accountability for what they think, feel, and do.

This is why clinical training is designed to ensure that the trainee doesn't have to do anything but take in information, engage in minimal practice with limited feedback, and then answer test questions at the end. At no point are they actually held accountable for anything that's happening inside them.

Clinicians and helping professionals like this type of learning because it's safe, and non- threatening. They will very often refuse, or avoid, any form of training that requires maturity. Changework sees this refusal/avoidance as a form of acting out to get your way. It's a refusal to engage in anything you don't approve of.

The problem with this behavior is that if you engage in it, you will allow your clients to do it as well. They will avoid what you're offering them in the same way you avoid what you feel to be wrong or uncomfortable. Now, nobody has to change. Teaching, and requiring maturity is the only way out of this.

27 Sensory Acuity

Sensory acuity is the starting point for all effective communication, and because of this it's a necessary element of Changework. Sensory acuity is the ability to see, hear, and feel. This sounds simple, but you can count on the fact that 99% of all human beings can't see, hear, or feel anything beyond their own experience... but firmly believe they can.

To be more specific, sensory acuity is the ability to see, hear, and feel... them. Most people's sensory acuity works as follows. First, they look a little bit. Nothing that would make the other person uncomfortable. Then they begin to listen to the details of the other persons story, and process those details in the light of their own learning and past experience.

As they process this, they begin to experience their emotional responses to their own internal process. They note their emotional responses, or engage in further processing to manage them. Then they start to reason about the details they've heard, and ask questions based on their desire for further details they believe to be important to their internal process and understanding.

And finally, they give the other person feedback that the feel would be useful based on how they understand what's happening. We need to start by noting that there's a profound difference between what you just read, and real sensory acuity.

Most people, particularly clinicians due to how they are trained, will rely almost completely on the intake of verbal information, to the exclusion of anything else. And them come to believe that their internal cognitive processing of verbal information is the perception of the other person.

Far too many people believe that useful sensory perception is them listening, talking to themselves about what they heard, deciding how they feel about it, and then taking action based on how they feel. The point I'm trying to make here, is that if you want to develop real sensory acuity, chances are you'll need to be taught.

Have you ever encountered someone, and when they spoke to you, you knew something was wrong? Something inside told you the other person was not ok in some way. This happens to us all the time, and most often we recognize this as a gut feeling, or some form of intuition.

The reality however, is that we're picking up normal, available, sensory data at an unconscious level, and then perceiving it as something else. Your "gut" is not something else, and it's not a guess. This feeling is the result of a small part of the natural sensory acuity you possess doing exactly what it's supposed to do. And you can learn to sharpen this skill set, and use it intentionally rather than experiencing it as something else.

Rather than developing useful sensory acuity, over time we become compulsive about our particular way of encountering experience, and processing information. Once our process becomes unconscious, habitual, and compulsive, we see everyone/everything we encounter through this lens. As a result, it becomes impossible to actually see,

hear, and feel other people. Our process is a self-enclosed loop, and we become effectively blind, deaf and emotionally fixated. We take in very little sensory data that isn't a projection of ourselves. In the end, what most people see, hear, and feel, is what they want to see, hear, and feel. Period.

To take your first steps outside your own perceptions, takes leveling, a lot of work, and someone who'll tell you when you're focused on you. You'll need this other person because the confrontation with your inability to see, hear, and feel is often... well... shocking.

Most of us will defend our belief that we have sensory acuity until we're confronted by someone who can actually see, hear, and feel other people. When this occurs, you learn the difference quickly. When you're working with a Changework trainer, and you're getting feedback about your sensory processing, it's stressful.

The trainer will be giving you feedback about your assumptions, strategies, needs, metaprograms, and behaviors that you may not be aware of. You're going to want to explain it away, or double down on the belief that you experience is just, righteous, and correct. You're going to respond by trying to explain your rationalizations, only to be confronted with more information you weren't aware of.

This is challenging. But your learning won't actually start without the realization that there's a difference between what you're doing, and what the trainer is doing. The best, and probably only way to learn sensory acuity is to spend time with someone who's better at it than you are.

Then you must surrender into what you need to learn, then you do it, and take feedback. Beyond your choice to surrender and learn, the challenge is not the sensory acuity skills themselves, it's discovering, and then interrupting/changing/stopping your unconscious, habitual, and compulsive strategies of function that keep you focused on you.

The truth is, when you're inside your own strategy, you can't really see, hear or feel other people. If you're unconsciously, and compulsively focused on you, the other person has to validate what you or you won't see them. Your need to compulsively more through your pattern, means that your needs must be met first, before anything else can happen.

This is an incredibly important point, and I can't say this enough. If you are inside your own strategy, you will have to have your needs met before you can see, hear, and feel another person. You will be unable to do anything for anyone, until you have done what you need to do for you.

If you haven't leveled, and learned that you can tolerate not having your needs met, you're not going to have much for sensory acuity. But let's say you're ready to go. What do you need to learn? The most important aspect of useful sensory acuity, is that it's almost entirely visual.

Remember the idea that 95% of all communication is nonverbal? If that's true, then your primary sensory channel better be your vision. Seeing what that person's neurophysiology is doing, and the behaviors being displayed are your best sources of information. The changes in neurophysiology such as breathing, skin color, pupil change, blink rate,

eye position, posture, movement, gestures, and facial expression are where you get the information you need. And you have very little time to get it. But make no mistake, what you see has to be your primary sensory intake. There's also something to be said for voice tone, and we'll talk about this in a moment.

But you need to surrender into the belief that your ability to see, not just look, is everything. Most clinical people, and "trained" helpers focus far too much on listening to the details of what is said. Our culture values active conversation, and it's what all helpers are taught.

The problem with this is that their verbal communication, without exception, is going to be part of their strategy which is designed to get their needs met. In other words, it's a practiced presentation designed to illicit your cooperation. It's a public relations effort meant to get you to perceive them in the way they want to be perceived, and then to give them what they want.

It's a script of sorts, and they're talking you into playing a particular role. The story, and its' details are NOT a useful source of information unless they're leveled. Only then to they begin to step outside the strategy. Normal conversation is simply not that useful, and allowing them to engaging in it with them will only reinforce the strategy.

Voice tone, particularly when the other person has been interrupted, or their script has been challenged in some way, will reveal emotional content. But you have only a moment to pick it up before they self-regulate and bring their tone back under cognitive control.

This skill requires practice, and feedback to develop. Tone is a good source of information, but it should still be understood in the context of what you see. All of us have experienced a moment where we ask someone a question, and their mouth says yes, but their body says something else.

They say the word yes, but their face, posture, movement, eyes, breathing all scream no. Seeing this incongruence is a skill we all possess, but few of us ever really cultivate. Their breathing, position, eyes, gestures, movement, facial expressions, behaviors as well as incongruencies between these elements all contribute to their overall communication.

The whole body is communicating, and if you learn to see it, you have more information available to you...and better information. Learning sensory acuity is learning to make this skill set intentional, rather than something your have a feeling about, or notice every once in a while. It goes from being a gut feeling or intuition, to a clear channel of information that you can observe, and follow up on.

Training in sensory acuity will teach you to monitor what they tell you, as well as what the rest of the body has to say. Useful communication, is being able to see all this, make sense of it, and then use it in a way that moves the other person toward learning, change, and the outcome.

If you have limited sensory acuity, it's doubtful you have any idea what's actually going on when you're interacting with other people. You'll have active conversation with them, notice how you feel about it, talk to yourself about the conversation until you decide what to do, or not do.

This isn't sensory acuity. This isn't even communication. This is projection, and counter transference. You'll be playing your role in the conversation, and everyone will feel very awesome, but generally speaking, this isn't useful. Sometimes they'll tell you how helpful, or validating the conversation was. They'll talk about what they understand differently now, or how they changed what they think.

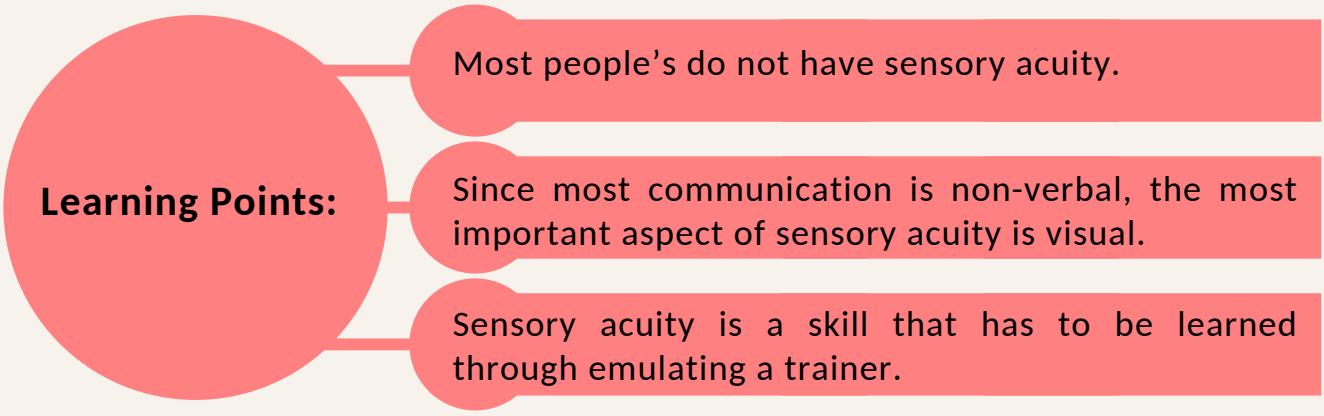
And if this is true, they will go home and immediately change, and engage in behavior that moves they toward their outcome. They will come back next week, and give an emotionally congruent report about what is different. They will be able to display how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are changing around this new learning.

If this isn't what's happening, and most often it isn't, then all those good feelings about the conversation must not be that useful. I feel compelled to mention at this point that many people feel it is possible to watch YouTube videos about interrogation, non-verbal behaviors, and micro-expressions, then read a few books about how to tell if someone is lying to you, and bingo, they have some kind of sensory acuity.

They may even buy a couple books on NLP, and go through the sensory acuity exercises. Doing this kind of information gathering makes people feel smart, but it's actually a way of avoiding real learning. You can watch YouTube, and read books till your eyeballs fall out, and you're new found knowledge will feel really cool until you have to display competence in something other than an armchair quarterback situation.

At this point, you'll discover exactly what you can, and can't do. Anything you learned from the internet, or from a book is going to

vanish in puff of smoke when the pressures on. Sensory acuity is a SKILL, it's not information/knowledge. No matter what you know, if you cannot do, you know nothing. If you want to be competent, find a trainer, start working, take feedback, and repeat this as many times as it takes.



Questions:

1. Take a moment and notice. Do you see people, or do you listen to them?
2. Which source of information is most important to you, what you see or what you hear?

Action Plan:

Find a crowded place, like a restaurant or a store. Find a few people who are talking that you can comfortably observe. Using only your vision, try to determine what they are feeling and how the conversation is going.

28 Rapport

The therapeutic understanding of rapport is a combination of attentive listening, and verbal feedback indicating that you heard what the other person said. This verbal feedback should also include indications that understand, and empathize with the other persons feelings.

Along with this therapeutic conversation is the assumption that you have some level of positive emotional regard for the other person, and that your communication is emotionally congruent. Therapeutic rapport may be defined in many ways, but functionally it is comfortable verbal interaction that makes the other person feel safe, and willing to communicate further.

Changework understands rapport a bit differently. We understand it differently because we believe that rapport has to be more than comfortable verbal interaction. I'm not suggesting that this level of communication is bad. I am suggesting that useful rapport has very little to do with conversation.

If you're going to take a human being through the bell curve of change, you need a connection to them that's more useful than this. Useful rapport cannot be based on conversation because most conversation is just a rationalization of the current strategy. In other words, they're sitting across from you intellectualizing, placating, blaming, and

distracting, while you tell them you heard what they said. Being able to comfortably intellectualize, placate, blame, and distract is exactly what people want when they're stressed, or unhappy. And because of this, the essence of therapeutic rapport is just trying not to piss them off at the beginning, and then validating them so that they feel safe and comfortable.

To move someone through the change process efficiently and effectively, you need a leveled connection with that person. The words they say need to match how they actually feel. They can't be intellectualizing, placating, blaming or distracting.

In other words, they are being emotionally honest with themselves about what they're experiencing right now. As Virginia Satir said, if the other person isn't leveling nothing useful is happening. This is important because when you have leveled communication, and sensory acuity, you can establish rapport with the other person's nervous system, rather than their conscious self.

Remember, with therapeutic rapport, we sit down, talk, and get to know each other. We make small talk, and have normal conversation until you feel comfortable enough to share your real concerns. I listen, and then give you feedback that indicates I heard you, and that I understand the meaning of what you said.

Then, I verbally acknowledge your feelings, and tell you directly that what you feel is appropriate, and reasonable. You take this in, and if I'm accurate in my empathetic understanding, you'll decide that it's safe to talk with me further.

This could take some time before you feel safe, and comfortable talking about the really important stuff. During this time, I continue to listen, reflect understanding, and offer empathy regarding your feelings. As time goes on, you have the evidence you need to trust me, and believe that I care about what's happening to you.

Over time we will build a familiar, and predictable connection that will allow you to share whatever you would like to share. This is a bit simplistic, but this is therapeutic rapport. Changework believes that this version of rapport isn't really useful, because it's not emotionally leveled, and because of this, it will be a rationalization.

It's the fully functioning pageant of social interaction designed to ensure that the person gets to feel as if they are already correct in what they think, feel and do. Everyone feels good, and everyone feel safe, precisely because we are safely inside the rationalization of the current strategy.

And more importantly, the more/longer the rationalization goes on, the harder it will be to change. Simply put, if everyone is safe, validated, and connected, we're probably not anywhere near leveling. Because therapeutic rapport is safe, and validating it builds a connection that is primarily intellectual.

If they display any emotion at all, it's going to be emotion they feel safe, and familiar with. This means it's very likely that the emotion you're seeing, is part of the strategy rather than actual emotional leveling. The emotions you're seeing are a part of the process they use to believe that their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are correct.

And you should recognize this, and agree with it. Most helping professionals will be too busy trying not to piss them off to do anything other than go along with this. If useful rapport is the goal, you need to turn away from comfortable, safe, and validating in favor of a connection to that person's neurophysiology.

You will need to use sensory acuity to build a connection with the gestalt of neurophysical functions operating outside that person's awareness. These neurophysical functions are outside the person's conscious awareness, and because of this, they are the best representation of that person unconscious attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors.

The first step in this process is have enough sensory acuity to see these neurophysical functions, then you can begin to reflect them back to the other person. You intentionally change your neurophysiological function, to reflect theirs. You start by matching them. Gently, and softly, you start to take on the same posture and position.

You begin to blink at the same rate, and then breath at the same rate, and depth. You softly take on the same facial expression, gestures, and movements. You adopt the emotion they display. If they feel sadness, you feel sadness. As they talk, you take on the beliefs they display.

If they believe the world is unfair, you do as well. You take on the attitudes they display, positive or negative. You adopt their values concerning themselves, others, or the world. You match anything you see, hear and feel. You take all this on, and you bring your

neurophysiology as close to theirs as you can. You have to sincerely do this. You have to drop your own agenda, your own attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. You have to easily put all this down… pick up someone else's life… and step into it. You have to indulge it…openly.

You have to surrender into that person's neurophysiology, as well as everything they think, feel, and do. Then, in your imagination, you live their life. Think about this like you have to play that person in a movie about their life. As you do this, two things will happen.

First, you're going to develop a lot of useful insight regarding what's going on inside that person, because some of it's going to be going on inside of you. Matching someone, and mirroring them is like trying them on as a suit. It's exactly like playing them in a movie. You step into their shoes, and walk a mile in your imagination.

Your ability to live their life in your imagination is everything. This is where useful rapport is born. The second thing that's going to happen, is that they're going to feel seen by you. As you interact with them, they are going to feel a sense of relief. This won't be a product of intellectual reasoning.

It's just going to be much easier for them to level with themselves, and you. And they may not even understand why. They'll feel a sense of surrender that's not cognitive at all. It's like that feeling you get when you meet someone, and you know you're going to like them. This process skips right over therapeutic rapport, to something much more useful. Useful rapport is a combination of method acting and imagination.

For a brief time, you match, and mirror that persons neurophysiology as completely as you can. Not considering it in your mind, not behaving as if, but actually becoming them…commit to it. You surrender into the experience of being them, leaving yourself at the door.

You imagine that this is who you are, this is your past, present and future. In this space, you come as close as you can to being this other person, and maybe a step or two further. This is empathy, and it's a learnable skill. It's the essence of what rapport should be.

This practice of stepping into the life of another person, and being them is what empathy actually is. Empathy is not the product of conversation. It's not an intellectual understanding. Useful empathy is the skill of stepping into the life another person, and becoming them.

It's an act of creative imagination as real as the sun coming up in the morning. This is empathy as a living skill, rather than a language-based construction. Anything other than stepping into the life of another person is a pale imitation of what empathy could be, and should be.

If you want useful rapport, match, and mirror their neurophysical function, and then surrender into as much of what they think, feel, and do as you can creatively imagine. See what happens next. If you're reading this and thinking that the whole idea sound ridiculous, I feel sorry for you.

This says more about you than it does about useful rapport. The practice of method acting is alive and well. I would guess that many of the movies you love, as well as the actors/actresses you love, are loved by

you because of method acting. There's nothing ridiculous or strange about this prospective on rapport. It's a basic, learnable skill. And this is why many Changeworkers enroll in an acting or improve class at some point during their training.

It's also why folks who've acted, or been in the theater, are usually better at changing people then those with a clinical background. Once you match/mirror their nervous system, and take on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors you can begin to pace.

Pacing is an effort to get your neurophysical functioning to match the speed, motion, flow and energy or their neurophysical function. This is a soft process, but not necessarily a slow one. All functions such as breathing, blinking, posture, gesture, movement, areas of tension, and information processing have a speed, flow, and an overall energy level.

When you establish rapport you softly move to match this. This is incredibly important because when you pace someone, you can begin to lead. Matching and pacing neurophysiology, and surrendering into their thoughts, feelings and behaviors is a type of functional empathy that allows for useful rapport.

Not a conversational, or intellectual understanding, but a connection to that persons neurology, physiology, and mind. This connection allows you to slow, interrupt, and change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. When you slow, they slow. When you calm, they calm. When you let go of a belief, can as well. When you feel capable and resourced, they'll feel more capable and resourced.

Useful rapport provides the connection you need to change the neurology, physiology and mind of the other person. Useful rapport is the foundation of a useful connection to both the conscious mind, and more importantly, the unconscious mind that is the primary organizer of all thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

When you have useful rapport with a person's neurophysiology, you have a useful rapport with their unconscious mind. Have you had to opportunity to care for an infant or toddler? When they become upset, or get hurt, they quickly move from frustration into neurophysiological overwhelm.

They become a ball of unregulated neurological, and physical function, and all of it is out of their control. They don't yet have the neurophysiological gear to self-regulate their experience. So, what do you do? You pick them up, hold them to you, soften your voice and slip into a rhythm of movement and touch.

This is nothing but immediate matching, pacing and leading. You're acting as an external neurophysiology that works quickly to match them, pace them, and lead them into LEARNING that their neurophysiology can self-regulate their experience by matching yours.

This is much of what raising children is. Matching, pacing, and leading an immature neurophysiology into LEARNING patterns of useful function. This is exactly how Changework sees useful rapport.

Learning Points:

1. Useful rapport is not the product of verbal interaction.
2. Empathy is built on matching/mirroring their neurophysiology, and then taking on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This is method acting.
3. Useful rapport is the non-verbal connection between your neurophysiology and theirs. This is how you see, and have an impact on the unconscious process of another person.

Questions:

1. When you're with your best friend, do you match and pace each other?

2. When you're at work, notice if you're matching and pacing your co-workers. What happens if you start matching them?

Action Plan:

Spend the day trying to gently match people when you're speaking to them. Notice what's different about your conversations. Notice how they respond when you do this.

29 Others Focus

When we discussed meta programs, we talked about whether you're self-focused or others-focused. When you're interacting with someone, are you inside talking to yourself about what you think, and feel, or are you external, attending to what they are doing and saying?

The answer to this question is important, and the reason should be fairly obvious. How are you going to help someone change, if you focus compulsively on yourself? For many of us, way over the 50% mark... way over... our default perception of all incoming information, is to go internal and talk to ourselves about what we think and feel.

If I'm self-focused, and you say or do X, I will be busy internally processing this experience. What do I think about that? Do I agree? How do I feel? Do I feel good about this? I will habitually, and unconsciously perceive all information through the lens of my thoughts, and feelings. Take a moment and remember your meta programs, particularly how you sort information.

Do you perceive information by how its' different than what you think, and feel, or do you perceive it by how it's similar? If you meet the world self-focused, you become the reference point by which everything is judged. You are entitled to decide what is right/wrong, good/bad, and you do this by sorting your experience/information by distinction.

Now think of this in terms of your shadow needs. If you have a primary emotional need, and you haven't moved through the bell curve of this need, and arrived at acceptance where you can tolerate it alone, then that need will be organizing all of your behavior.

This means that you'll be self-focused, and consistently sorting information by what you disagree with in an effort to get your need met. Think about this for a moment. That person came to you for help, and you're compulsively on focused on you, and meeting your needs.

Does this sound useful to you? I've trained, and supervised around a thousand clinicians over the course of my career, and I'm sad to say that far too many clinicians are doing exactly this. Being others focused is an aspect of maturity. The ability to tolerate frustrated desire alone.

The ability to experience your own needs, interrupt the strategy you would use to address them, and go on to focus on the needs of someone else. This is maturity. This is THE reason for Changework's focus on maturity. All Changework training is going to focus on moving you toward a compulsive focus on others, rather than yourself. To commit to training in this process, is to commit to maturity.

It is a single-minded decision to focus on others. If you're working with another person, and you're focused on yourself in any way, this focus will mark the limits of your ability to help that person. When some of you hear this, you may be thinking, "That's not healthy," or "That will lead to burn out." I'm happy to tell you that Changework sees these ideas as a rationalization.

In the vast, vast majority of cases, ideas like burn out, or your well-being are simply excuses you can use to remain your own favorite person. If you choose to believe that your life should be focused on you that's cool.

Maybe Changework isn't going to be your bag. But make no mistake, "That's not healthy" and "That will lead to burn out", is just another way of saying, "I will give until I reach a point where I'm no longer feeling it. And when it's clear that I'm not going to get what I need, I'm going to feel hurt, self-rightous, angry, and resentful. Then I'm going to take my ball, and go home."

If you feel that your health is being impacted by your work, or you're burning out, I would invite you to consider that your problem isn't too much commitment, too much effort, or a bad case of compassion fatigue. Your problem is that you're not getting what you thought you would get, and you feel some resentment about that.

If you feel like you're burning out, you may need to recognize that your life is not supposed to about you, or your needs. You chose the path of being a helper. Did you really choose this believing that the path was supposed to take care of you? Changework holds to the idea that once we're adults, our purpose on this earth has nothing to do with getting our needs met.

Children get their needs met. Once we are adults, we're supposed to leave this behind. As children we get to believe we're right. We get focus on our uniqueness/specialness. We get to differentiate ourselves from others.

And we get to spend or time concerned about ideas like justice and fairness. By the time were 18 or so, the “What about me?” thing, needs to be over. If you’re an adult, and you’re still talking about your needs, your joy, your bliss, your wellness, self-care, taking time for you, or some other self-focused compulsion, it’s time to do some adulting.

Your life, is not supposed to be about you. Since we’re talking about being compulsively others-focused we need to take a moment and talk about the martyr. These folks are others-focused, but only as a vehicle to feel righteous. They eagerly give to others, then after they’ve given so much, they to be validated in some way.

This validation allows them to feel righteous, and this feeling is goal. For a time, or at a distance, they’ll appear to be others focused, but rather than being comfortable and ordinary, they’ll going to talk about sadness, anger, “burn out”, frustration, injustice or the emotional/physical burden of their work over time.

The martyr needs the emotional payoff of being validated as a giver. That’s the whole point. When they don’t get the validation their looking for, they will often become angry, and/or seek out someone else to validate them.

After training and supervising mental health clinicians for two decades, you need to hear that martyrdom is an epidemic in the helping professions. Not to belabor the point, but if you’re in this racket to get your needs met, you’re going to be the only one that gets their needs met.

Learning Points:

1. It is very difficult to help someone, and have them meet your needs at the same time.
2. Burn out, and compassion fatigue are common reactions to not having your needs met.

Questions:

1. Can you think of an interaction in which you didn't get your needs met? How did you respond?
2. Can you think of other interactions in which you engage in this same response?

Action Plan:

Take a moment, and think about an interaction after which you felt great. What did you think, and feel about that other person, or the interaction before it occurred? What actions did you take that made the interaction great? For the rest of the day, take those same thoughts, feelings, and actions into every interaction you have. What do you notice?

30 Behavior Flexibility

The person with the most behavior flexibility is ultimately in control of the interaction. This means that the person willing to engage in the most intense, frequent, charged, consistent, and extreme behavior will ultimately have control of whatever is happening. Let's go back to parenting for a moment.

Young children, as they begin to socially interact, will escalate behavior flexibility to gain control. The younger the child, the more likely this is to be the primary strategy. They will scream, cry, pout, and act out in response to boundaries, limitations, and requirements. And the goal of this behavior is to get their way.

Whatever that might be. In response, the parent will have to ratchet up the volume, intensity, or frequency of their behavior if they want to have control of the interaction. To be an effective parent, you must have more behavior flexibility than your child. If you don't/can't, you're probably not in charge in your own home.

Teenagers will engage in the same forms of behavior flexibility to get their way, but their physical growth, and hormone changes allow for significant escalation. They will often move past normal acting out, and into verbal, and physical aggression to gain control.

The developmental tasks of adolescence and the social pressures at work can result in extreme levels of behavior. Adults also use behavior flexibility to control their world. It's easy to think that acting out to get your way is something only children and teenagers do, but this isn't true.

Adults are the most effective practitioners of behavior flexibility in existence because they have become more sophisticated over time. They have all the tools of childhood, and adolescents as well as well as a deeper understanding of the impact of emotion on others.

Adults are trying to get their way, they're just opting for less confrontational, and more manipulative means. There are a few points to notice about adult behavior flexibility. The first is the failure of maturity. This should be obvious. They're not tolerating frustrated desire alone.

This means that they still believe they're entitled to get their way. The second is that adults tend to use their behavior flexibility to achieve either admiration, or sympathy. There are trying to lower their stress by getting the ego boost of admiration, or the lack of accountability that comes with sympathy. In most cases, adult behavior is designed to achieve either admiration or sympathy.

Acting out to get your way not only decreases stress, it's also a vehicle for secondary gain. What I mean by secondary gain is that if you're willing to go far enough, if you're flexible enough, acting out will almost always ensures that you get our way. This is the secondary gain. . You lower your stress by controlling the situation, and the secondary gain is

that you can have your way as well. Escalating your behavior flexibility will always be an effective strategy in the short term; the long term is another matter. It's important to realize that behavioral flexibility, acting out to get your way, isn't always louder, faster, and harder.

A person can act out by playing the victim, playing dumb, not understanding, or being confused. They can act out by being overwhelmed, or asking you to understand that this is difficult for them. They can act out by moving slowly, refusing to follow through, being too busy, and creating emergencies.

They can act out by only doing half, being passive aggressive, hurting others, and even being a martyr. Acting out is any behavior that doesn't match your commitments and responsibilities. It's any behavior that doesn't move you toward your outcome. It might occur to you at this point, that a great deal of our everyday behavior is actually a form of acting out.

We act out so unconsciously, habitually, and compulsively, that we don't realize we're doing it. We've told ourselves our story, and the rationalizations for our actions so many times that we believe them. We believe our excuses, reasons, denials, deflections, and distortions. They make complete sense to us.

We're absolutely certain our story is true, and more importantly correct Therefore, our behavior is appropriate and righteous. We completely believe our story to the point that we don't really have to consider it anymore. We know we're right, and our behavior is right.

Yet, it never occurs to us that the next person feels the same way about their story, for the same reasons. When we come into conflict, or get negative feedback, our response is anything but, “I bet he/she looks at this situation differently.”

We’ve spent so much time compulsively indulging our own rationalizations that it never occurs to us that we’re simply acting out to get our way at the expense of the world around us. I’ve had so many opportunities to learn this lesson throughout my life. As I’ve aged, whenever I was made to do something that I didn’t want to do, or didn’t think was reasonable, I would act out. I would deny, deflect, distort, and destroy, and believe I was justified.

I had good reasons why whatever I was being told was unreasonable, unjust, or unfair. My reasons weren’t like your reasons. Mine were correct, and I was justified. If you didn’t agree, then you obviously didn’t understand the situation, or you were just being difficult. Basic Training at Fort Benning, Georgia fixed some of this.

The gentlemen employed by this organization simply forced me to comply, and were kind enough to take me all the way through the bell curve of change when I refused the lesson. I remember the day very well. It was balmy mid-July afternoon in Georgia, and I had just spent several hours pushing a cue ball across a saw dust pit with my nose.

The temperature was a comfy 95 plus Fahrenheit, and one of the men in charge cared enough about me to stay with me that afternoon. He made certain that I stayed hydrated and, got all the way to acceptance. I did.

I learned many things that afternoon. I learned that I wanted to be in charge all the time, and how devious I was about it. The US Army felt that our relationship wouldn't work effectively that way, and they very strongly suggested that I was wrong. They suggested that that everything that came out of my mouth was an excuse for me because I was afraid.

I learned that afternoon to shut my mouth, do what I was told, and never quit. I learned that this was the only way I would every have any integrity. That afternoon changed me profoundly. But even this, I compartmentalized, and didn't generalize it to my whole life. I had to wait several more decades for that gift.

The moral of the lesson concerning behavioral flexibility in this story, was how far that man was willing to go, and how much time he was willing to take, to get me to acceptance. Be advised that I've shortened this story considerably. For almost five hours he never left me for a moment. He confronted me every time I spoke, or looked funny. He screamed, intimidated, harassed, threatened, and shamed me.

He did whatever had to be done to get me to acceptance, and I'm very sure he would have kept me there for as long as it took to get me where he wanted me to be. I had behavior flexibility, he had more. This is how behavioral flexibility is used. Now take this in... what he did for me, was a form of love. Never forget that point.

Changework sees behavior flexibility as the key. There's no other way to do this. Human beings want to respond to almost all difficulty, with some form of self-pity.

Our response to difficulty is almost always designed to illicit admiration or sympathy. The strategies we use to achieve this operate unconsciously, habitually and compulsively. And even though we believe we see ourselves clearly, we don't. We lack insight, we're desperate to get our needs met, and we focus only on ourselves.

The reality of this situation simply doesn't leave any room for conversation, reason, argument, logic or this thing we call psychotherapy. To help people change, you have to have more than conversation, logic and reason. You have to make time, do it again, make another call, stay up later, make them angry, risk a negative response, and act a little crazy at times.

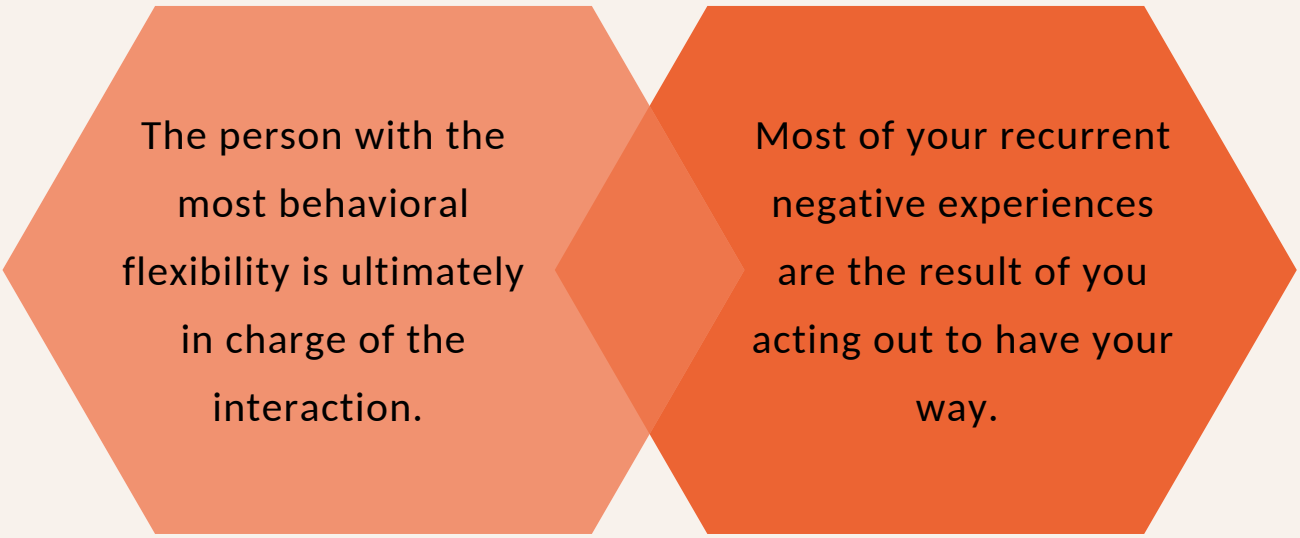
Are you Ok with this? Are you ready to give first, give most and give often? Are you ready to commit yourself to doing what needs to be done to get that person moving in the right direction? Are you ready to put other people in front of yourself? Even in front of your own needs and wants?

This is the exact moment in the teaching process where many students will start to talk to the trainer about their ethics, their boundaries, or something about professional behavior. And yes, regarding behavior flexibility there is a danger of going too far. But this is the exception, and not the rule.

Most of the time, when someone is talking about ethics, boundaries, or professional behavior, they're simply acting out so that they aren't accountable. They want to take the money, and make no real commitment to an outcome.

They want to have the role of the helper, but absolutely no accountability when the process isn't going anywhere useful. They want the right to bail when things get difficult, weird, or unproductive, and they want the other person to be responsible for any perceived failure. At the end of the day, conversations about ethics, boundaries, and professionalism, are very often just another form of acting out.

Learning Points:



Questions:

Think about a past negative experience. How could you have been trying to get your way in this situation?

Action Plan:

Try to become aware of an interaction in which your response might be a form of acting out. Make an effort to level with yourself, and if possible, with the others involved. At least say what you think you might be doing. Notice what's different after you do this?

31 Techniques

Changework has a set of techniques drawn from a collection of sources including NLP, learning theory, marketing, advertising, the Strasberg acting method, stage performance, theatre, multiple approaches to hypnosis, the work of Virginia Satir, magic, mentalism, as well as others. Remember, the focus of Changework isn't a theory, a base of knowledge, or bits of data/information... its effectiveness.

That's the test. Does the technique stop, interrupt, or in some way change the current strategy or state? Does it change the neurophysiology of the person in a way that helps them move through the bell curve of change toward acceptance, learning, and their outcome? Changework's prospective on technique doesn't look to psychology as a source of validation.

Rather, Changework is focused on being an empirical process focused on trial and error. Empiricism suggests that useful skills could be/would be derived from experience. Useful skills are the product of a trial-and-error process in which you keep what works, and repeat it.

A practice-based feedback loop that allows for the construction of a useful set of tools, rather than a body of knowledge, or theoretical understanding. Trial-and-error learning is empiricism, and empiricism is science as much as any approach to social science.

And given what we've learned from the body of reproducibility research, any reasonable empirical approach is as scientific as psychology. But remember there is a difference between Changework and psychology. Changework isn't aiming for theory, knowledge or data, it's aiming for a useful set of skills that effectively help people learn, change and achieve their outcome.

Historically, there is evidence to suggest that trial-and-error empiricism is every bit as important as academic theory and knowledge. Particularly if you're looking for the creative development of new ideas, tools, and technologies. It's trial-and-error empiricism that's responsible for many of the "breakthrough" moments in business, technology, research, and interpersonal skills.

A significant number of useful new ideas, no matter what the field, are the result of empirical serendipity, rather than the result of a targeted research project. We're often led to believe that the really cool advances in human progress were discovered, or developed because academic science was looking for them.

After all, when the information filters down to you and I, it consistently comes from an academic or research industry source. But this is misleading, because it doesn't mean the idea originated there. It means that the source presenting to us has a functional medial or public relations arm.

Once the idea is out in the open, academic science, and other research industry will pick it up and start working with it. These tradition laboratory research environments are fantastic at clarifying and

expanding an idea once it has traction in the world. But the actual "breakthrough" moment is often someone who stumbled onto that idea/skill as the result of a trial-and-error process. Serendipity is very often the source of breakthrough ideas. To be empirical is to rely on trial-and-error experience to ascertain what's useful and effective.

Psychology and other social sciences will tell you that this prospective is inferior to the methodology of controlled scientific research, but again I think we've spent enough time talking about the results of that particular process. But academic science is going to reach negatively to this idea. No matter what their own track record might be.

Academic science of all stripes is always eager to return to the idea that if a single quack, or charlatan, is not an academic, and then all non-academics are quacks, and charlatans. It's time we saw this differently.
There's a wide range of people, and ideas that contribute to the techniques of Changework, and the reading list for trainers includes more than 25 sources. Here are just a few:

Influencing With Integrity:	Genie Laborde
The New People Making:	Virginia Satir
Gestalt Is:	John Stevens
Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis:	William Kroger
Hypnotherapy:	Dave Elman

Heart of the Mind:	Steve and Connirae Andreas
Mind-Body Therapy:	David Cheek and Ernest Rossi
My Voice Will Go With You:	Sidney Rosen

The list of techniques used by Changework might be small, but the wisdom behind them is huge. But it's important to realize, that it's not really about the techniques. Changework doesn't approach the use of technique in a prescribed "technique X for situation Y", or "Now... do step one. Wait for it... now do step two." kind of way.

The use of any technique is built on the foundational skills of sensory acuity, rapport, modeling, and maturity. It's this foundation that brings the technique to the person, rather than brining the person to the technique. For a technique to be useful it has to address itself to the universal, generalized, and archetypal aspects of human functioning, rather than specific, individual facts.

The techniques of Changework are about engineering the archetypal emotional experiences people need to learn, and change. Every strategy we use in the world is sequence of learned steps that allows us to lower our stress, and survive. To interrupt, change, or stop a strategy, we need an emotional experience that allows new/different learning. Without new learning, nothing will change.

From a universal perspective, techniques change the immediate emotional experience of the person so they can continue through the bell curve of change to acceptance.

In other words, they move closer to tolerating their experience alone. The negative experience of everyday stress, to the more traumatic fight/flight/freeze/fawn response, can make it difficult for someone to surrender into an experience, and move all the way to acceptance.

The techniques of Changework are a set of tools that bring emotional learning, and with it that person can change how they are functioning in the world. The techniques of Changework are organized around a handful of simple truths.

1. People learn because of emotional experience, and they justify their learning after the fact using their intellect.
2. Almost all human behavior is part of an unconscious, habitual, and compulsive pattern.
3. Knowledge of problem content is not necessary for behavior change, and most often slows the process of change.
4. Changing people means changing how their nervous system functions.

Changework isn't focused on the Changeworker. Change is not about the person of the therapist. Change is about the client, and the skills that help them to learn, change, and achieve their outcome. Technique, much like hypnosis itself (which is our next stop), are tools that are used to engineer useful experience.

For the Changeworker, the only thing that matters is that they hold the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors necessary to help the client learn, and change.

Learning Points:

1. Useful techniques for change must be focused on effectiveness.
2. Useful techniques for change must be focused on the universal, generalized, and archetypal aspects of human learning.
3. Useful technique is focused on changing the way the nervous system works. In other words, the nervous system needs to be capable of tolerating the experience, and move through the bell curve of stress all the way to acceptance.

Questions:

Think of something you do well… how did you develop this skill?

Action Plan:

Think of a situation, or interaction you would like to change. Based on what you're learning, what actions could you try that might move you toward the outcome you want? Pick one or two of these actions and use them at the next opportunity.

32 Hypnosis

If conversation, reason, logic, knowledge, and/or information were sufficient to bring change there would be no need for psychotherapy. People would engage in reasonable discussions, express their thoughts/feelings, acquire the knowledge/information they need, determine the best course of action, and then act on it.

This process would be naturally ongoing until the problem was no longer an issue. In everything you've read so far, I have gone to some effort to explain why this perspective doesn't work. At its simplest, people don't change because of conversation, logic, reason, knowledge, or information. They change because of emotional experience that brings learning and then change.

They justify their change after the fact with conversation, logic, reason, knowledge, and information. We've been told by psychology, and to a lesser extent by medicine, that their process, by many different names and descriptions, is the only effective method for helping people change.

We've been told this in spite of extensive evidence suggesting that their claims are in question. I'm completely on board with the idea that every perspective on change should have to prove itself. Effectiveness, as perceived by the customer/client is the only measure that matters. Therefore it's time we widened our scope beyond what psychology has on offer.

To review for a moment. Human beings confidently believe that we understand our motivations, thoughts, and feelings, and that our actions are the result of conscious choices. But as we've discussed, this doesn't seem to be the case. We are not moving through the world making conscious choices based on reason, and then acting on them.

Most of our internal processing, and function in the world is unconscious, habitual, and compulsive. And although we reject this idea concerning ourselves, we tend to believe this is the case for other people. In the light of this, it's not reasonable to believe that the process we call psychotherapy is the only effective way to bring about human change.

Put simply, you can't conversation/reason/knowledge/information a person out of an unconscious, habitual, and compulsive behavior. You can't "talk" them out of, or through a pattern of coping that lowers their stress level, and offers them useful emotional experience of being correct.

If we're going to be serious about change, we need to be serious about the idea that the only process that can bring change, is emotional learning. Enter hypnosis. Hypnosis is a tool that relies on relaxation, fixed attention, and repetition to bring about learning. But not learning in the academic or intellectual sense. Hypnosis is not a process based in reason, or logic.

Hypnosis is focused on engineering the emotional experiences people need to learn, and change. And doing the majority of this outside conscious awareness.

We've already addressed this point, but it's worth mentioning again. If the conscious mind could organize change, it would have done so by now. Hypnosis works to nullify, distract, or sidestep the conscious/cognitive mind, and directly engage the much larger constellation of mind that we call unconscious.

It is a simple, basic fact, that the vast majority of human perception, processing, memory, and function is unconscious to us. And this unconscious mind is extremely sensitive, and eager to learn and change. It is exactly this affinity for unconscious learning, and change that has allowed you to function in the world, and survive.

The focus of Changework is the engineering of emotional experiences that move people through the bell curve of change to acceptance. In acceptance, when you are tolerating frustrated desire alone, you can make a decision and take action. This action, is the feedback you receive, is the foundation of learning and change.

Hypnosis is a tool that initiates, develops, contains, modulates, organizes, and strengthens this whole experience. Hypnosis provides a way to introduce new ideas, beliefs, resources, moods, and states of mind, and then visualize acting on them. It's a way to introduce suggestions, and through this, shape the way the unconscious processes information, as well as what information it's processing.

Hypnosis is a way to integrate different aspects of the self, different states, and different strategies. Through focused emotional experience, hypnosis can get the unconscious moving roughly toward whatever the persons outcome might be.

And this allows the person to make decisions and take action to achieve that outcome. Hypnosis is a process similar to making a movie. It's a technology, a platform that allows a person to have the emotional experiences they need to move through the bell curve of change to acceptance.

It's a virtual theater where a person can have the experiences they need, or change the context of the experiences they've had, in a way that allows them to take action, learn, and change. Hypnosis is a tool that can bring about growth and maturity in the context of a human life. Again, it does all this by working around, and behind, the conscious, cognitive mind as much as possible.

This is the aspect of hypnosis that everyone thinks they understand. And strangely, they think this single feature, is the tool. Yes, hypnosis does work around the conscious mind. It can distract, confuse, numb, or otherwise manipulate consciousness until it's in communication with the aspects of our neurophysiology that we would call unconscious.

But remember, it's the emotional experience that matters. There has to be an emotional experience that moves the person toward learning. In this process, the use of suggestion or directive is not the point. You can't, at least not very often, just bypass the conscious mind and tell the unconscious what to do and boom, problem solved.

It's the construction of an emotional experience that matters. It's the whole emotional experience that moves us toward learning, and change. Hypnosis is used to engineer emotional learning experiences that help the client to interrupt their pattern, and then move through the bell

curve of change to acceptance. In reality, the tool of hypnosis is just a smaller, condensed version of the whole process called Changework. Hypnosis as a technique, works for the same reasons, and in the same way. Hypnosis can be used in conversation, it can be used as an actual induction, and it can also take other forms that are less common and less well known. To engage in Changework, is to engage in one long session of hypnosis.

Learning Points:

1. Change is not the result of talk, language or conversation.
2. Hypnosis is a tool used to engineer experiences that lead to learning and change.

Questions:

1. Have you ever watched a movie of someone doing something and believed you could do something like that?
2. How did you act on it?



Everyone has a movie the makes them feel awesome. Pick a task, interaction, or situation that makes you feel a little worried or uncertain. Next time you have to engage in that task, interaction or situation, watch your movie first. Notice what happened.

33 Story

Scott McFall likes to make sure that everyone around him remembers a simple but important idea. The truth is told in stories and parables, and BS will come to you validated by facts, and data. This is an important idea so let's look at the point he's trying to make. He's trying to tell us that meaningful learning is not going to arrive at your doorstep as information.

He's suggesting that we need to be cautious about information, because most of the time it feeds our ego and we actually learn nothing. And worse, we walk away with the sense that we're very intelligent, and probably very special. Scott reminds you that meaningful learning can only come to you as story.

A story doesn't easily lend itself to your individual specialness. It's not yours. You might decide that this song is about you... but it isn't your song. Stories are archetypal, generalized, universal invitations to an experience that could go somewhere useful. A story is a vehicle that invites you into an emotional experience.

Then, it goes on to move you through a series of emotional stages and moods that result in the possibility of learning. It's a universal, generalized, archetypal way to move through part or the entire bell curve of change to acceptance. My friend Fr. Gary Frahm would tell me,

“When God wants you to be a student; he’ll send you a teacher. When he wants you to be a teacher, he’ll send you stories.” Story is a tool that uses emotional experience to invite realization and learning. That’s its purpose. Story invites you to move through the emotional experience of something universal, in a way that can take you to the door step of learning.

You might need a specific resource or strength. You might need to move through a stage in the change process. You might need to move through the whole bell curve of something. Story can be focused on a task as simple as a single moment, or it can be pointed at a problem as large as your life. It can do any of these while remaining universal, generalized and archetypal.

I love to talk with students about a specific scene in the movie, The Karate Kid. Particularly if they haven’t seen it. Well, even if they have seen it, I’ll tell them anyway. Now this is the first Karate Kid… the real one. Don’t get me started on the others. Anyway, there’s a scene in the movie where Daniel arrives at Mr. Miyagi’s home to start learning Karate.

After some conversation, Mr. Miyagi says, and I’m paraphrasing here, “First make sacred pact. I promise teach Karate You promise learn. Teacher say, student do. No question. Learning Karate is like walking on road. Walk right side, safe. Walk left side, safe.

Walk middle, pretty soon; get the squish, just like grape. You Karate do… same. You Karate do yes, or Karate do no. You, Karate do, guess so… get the squish just like grape. Understand.” I’m curious… do you

understand? Story may be the most effective tool we have for the generalized, universal, and archetypal human learning that we've been talking about. It may be the only real tool we have to help others learn, and change. Story is in us. Human beings are the writers, keepers, and tellers of stories.

We arrive on this planet, with not only an appreciation for story, but it appears we may intuitively understand how to use it to help others, and ourselves. Any process, focused on giving someone theory, knowledge, research, data, fact, or detail doesn't really offer learning. What they offer is information.

And we love Information because it allows us to feel smart and special. We get to feel smart, and special, without any accountability for what we do, or don't do, with the information we were given. How many people do you know who are suffering, and they know exactly what they need to do... but don't do it?

Everyone want's information. And we love the organized dispersal of information that we call education. We want this, because there's virtually no accountability in it, for anything but being able to remember, and repeat the information we were taught. There are of course exceptions to this in our system of education.

But these exceptions will most often be the development of skills that we need to function in the world or in a specific field of activity. Examples of this would include reading, writing and basic mathematics. These are skills, as much as they're information. Story, and the process of telling stories, has history on its side. Humans have been using story

as a tool of change for as long as there have been humans. This is one of the few things we naturally seem to understand and use. We remember what happened, and we tell others about it. Story, poem, performance, song, movie, painting, sculpture, architecture and drama. All of what we call the arts, are just ways that we tell a story.

This is who we are. It works for us. Historically, story has been our chosen vehicle to pass on culture, history and general wisdom that's useful for being human. It's our attempt to pass on the universal, generalized, and archetypal learning from one generation to the next. This is important because this is what has allowed us to survive, and succeed, and become.

This is THE reason we need to be serious about it. Story has proven itself. It works. YouTube has a series you can watch called Masterclass. These classes are essentially stories from experts, craftsman, musicians, business people, writers, scientists and artists from different fields. People who are acknowledged as one of the best, at what they do.

I watched the Masterclass that Ron Howard, the actor and film director did. He said something amazing about stories that I won't ever forget. I'm paraphrasing again, but he said something like, "When I first started directing films, my mentors told me there were only a few stories that you could tell. Now, I think there's only one story."

I hope after reading this, you're beginning to realize that this is exactly right. And, maybe, you're beginning to understand why it's right. The best story is the story that the other person needs to hear. The best way to tell a story is the way the other person needs to hear it, to discover

what they need. Since human change is very much the same, the stories that changed you, will very often be the ones that change others. The TV and movies that caused you to make a decision, act and then learn will often be just as useful for others. Learning, is learning, is learning. Change, is change, is change. It isn't just you.

The stories that others tell you about what happened to them, are just as wonderful and useful. Story is never the wrong answer. But having a teacher and taking feedback is going to be useful as you learn how to use stories. Experience will help you determine what story to tell, and how to tell it.

Experience will also help you to understand when to tell a story, and how to take someone to a place where they're ready and able to hear it. This isn't magic, but it matters. Again, story is never the wrong answer, but ensuring that the listener is ready, is important. It's the art of the process, and like everything else, it's a skill you can learn. Let's frame this for you a bit more.

When you tell a story, you're not trying to share information. You're not trying to convince them of a specific point. A story isn't an academic learning experience in which, the listener is supposed to take in the lecture, and then reflect on the information they were given. This is missing the point completely. You tell a story, to engineer an experience.

To move the listener through the emotional states and moods they need to have, to arrive at a place where they can learn what they need to achieve their outcome. To listen to a story, to really listen, is to

surrender into a readiness, a curiosity, an openness that allows for an epiphany. Epiphany is a moment of sudden learning that emerges from inside you. It's a realization of something you probably already knew. If a story only offers information for you to take in, you're better off watching TV.

The art of using story, or any other aspect of Changework, is the ability to move the listener into a place where epiphany happens. Epiphany is the wisdom, the point, of the whole process. There's not, and can't be, anything cognitive about this. Wisdom and real learning are never the product of a deductive reasoning process. Using a story is completely inductive.

The listener takes in the whole thing, the whole experience, and then arrives at the lesson. Bang. Think about what you just read for a moment. I know you have experience after experience that will validate this idea. How many movies or TV programs have you watched and then… bang. There it was. You knew, you just knew.

It was suddenly clear, in a way you never considered before. In that moment you realized something about yourself, other people, or your relationships. You realized what you were supposed to be doing, and why. You might even realize that you already knew this, but hadn't seen it clearly.

It's as if you suddenly saw something that had always been there. You know what I'm talking about… right? This is exactly how story is supposed to work. If I haven't made it clear already, I'm fascinated by magic. I love magic because I think it's one of the best ways to help

human beings learn and change. When done well, magic is a combination of performance, and story, and trickery that can change your life. It leads you to a place, where what you were certain about a moment before, suddenly collapses. Interrupting everything you are, everything you thought you knew… in this moment, anything is possible, and everything is changeable.

Michael Ammar is a magician. One of the best there is at close up magic. One day, while I was watching him, I learned everything there was to know about change. He was doing his cups and balls routine, and it was lovely. Smooth, flawless, hilarious, and captivating. He had people sitting maybe, a foot or two in front of him. They were right there.

They could see everything. As the routine when on, they became increasingly caught up in what he was doing. How you might ask, or why, watch Michael and you'll know. Anyway… there was a moment when he had their attention, completely. He was showing them something, I think he was intentionally disappearing a ball.

And suddenly, he stops and points to the top of one of the cups, that's has been sitting on the table, in plain sight of all of them the entire time. On top of the cup, was a ball. With no reason to be there, and no way to get there. It was the most amazing moment of close up magic I had ever seen.

As I watched, I looked at the face of a woman in the front row. Her face was a combination of confusion, frustration, intense thought and then into wonder. I saw her move through the entire bell curve of that experience in just a few seconds. In that last moment, her face told me

everything. That's how change happens. This's how the bell curve works. That's how a story is given… rather than told. That's how an old model of the world falls away. That's the moment where anything is possible. Michael gave her that moment, and simply went on. Because that's his job. My job, from that point in my life forward, was to get other people to that place, and then help them use it to achieve whatever their outcome is.

Learning Points:

1. Story is a generalized, universal, and archetypal invitation to an experience.
2. Story should lead the listener through an experience that leads to learning and change.

Questions:

1. Remember a story, performance, or movie that changed your life. What was different about you after the story?
2. What actions did you take after the story?
3. What did you learn?

Action Plan:

Go back to that movie, performance, or story that changed you. If possible, watch it again and down the emotions you experience. Maybe it starts with anxiety, then fear, then surrender, then acceptance, then confidence… etc. Notice the experience the story takes you through, and what you feel like at the end. Stay in that feeling, and go do something challenging. What happens?

34 Change Physiology First

The organization of our perceptions, information processing, decision making, and behavioral responses are all largely unconscious to us. Yet, we maintain near certainty that the person we are, and the actions we choose, are free, autonomous, and fully conscious.

Even as we hold this belief, if we're honest, part of us strongly suspects that our neighbor may not always be aware of what he's doing, and why he's doing it. The idea that our own behavioral responses could be the product of unconscious processes is all at once, ridiculous, and frightening.

This thing we call our "unconscious mind" is really the collected functions of our neurophysiology that operate outside conscious awareness. Yet these functions work in a way that clearly indicates intelligence, and purpose. It's this intelligence, this goal-oriented functioning, that causes us to experience the whole thing as a "mind", rather than a reflex or some other action our body-mind engages in.

Given our current understanding, there isn't any point in arguing for a definition of the unconsciousness "mind" outside this. Any concept of actual "unconscious mind" beyond our neurophysiological function will get very murky, very quickly.

A large part of whom and what we are, is simply a constellation of neurophysiological functions that are outside our awareness. This system, and the functions that make it up, are like every other aspect of the human being is highly complex, non-linear, and autonomous. And it certainly isn't located in your brain.

It would include brain, but also your entire nervous system, and the physiology it innervates. This entire whole, our neurophysiology, our body-mind, is our unconscious. This whole system is the "mind" we're talking about.

What we call our unconscious, is a complex, non-linear, and autonomous system of functions, focused primarily on ensuring our survival through useful and effective adaptation. Its purpose is to keep us alive, and hopefully, allow us to pass on our genes to the next generation.

Or, as Christopher Hitchens said, at least allow us to take part in activities that might allow these genes to be passed on. Some of these processes are dedicated to hard core survival functions. But for most of us, survival situations are few and far between. The majority of the system is occupied with useful coping responses for stress, and ensuring that our emotional needs are met.

But understand that the unconscious mind, whatever it is, is not your brain. It's your entire neurophysiology. Unconscious mind is the collection of neuro-physical functions that engage with, take feedback from, adjust to, and re-engage the reality around us. It is engaged with the world around it in a way that acts to ensure effective adaptation and

survival. . Your unconscious has an actual feedback loop with the reality you live in. And this loop, doesn't require, or often even benefit from, the participation of your conscious mind. The conscious mind doesn't have this same feedback loop with reality. It is always meeting the world forensically.

It is eternally at the boundary of, and then behind the present moment. It is encountering reality, after it occurs. Therefore, it doesn't have to level with reality as it is. It can deny, defect, delete, and/or destroy, the experience that took place, or simply construct an experience that better meets your needs.

And once it constructs an experience that is emotionally useful, our conscious mind can refuse all future learning and change. Our neurophysiology, our unconscious mind knows that the conscious mind can't be trusted if adaptation and survival are the goal.

Your unconscious mind knows that if your conscious mind were actually in control, you would immediately struggle to make decisions and act in the moment You would struggle to learn new information in a way that would be useful to your adaptation and survival. You would become a ball of doubt, hesitation and fear.

You would struggle respond to the simplest of situations, and this would quickly lead to dysfunction, suffering and death. Your unconscious mind doesn't appear to believe that your conscious mind can be trusted to interact with reality in a useful way. It knows that it can't trust the conscious mind, to cope usefully with the basics of daily life, and certainly not adaptation to stress and survival.

Your unconscious mind knows that the person you consciously think you are can't usefully make decisions or take feedback. It's too fragile, needy, and fearful, particularly when under stress. It knows that your conscious mind has only a tenuous relationship with reality, and often, it will refuse useful feedback, and just make up what it wants to believe.

Your unconscious knows that your conscious mind is largely a fiction that it created for itself. Your unconscious mind adapts to this situation by removing your conscious mind from the loop much of the time. And it does this in a fascinating way. Your unconscious mind, sort of tricks your conscious mind into thinking that it's not really there.

This allows your conscious mind to believe it's actually in charge. Simply put, your unconscious knows that your conscious mind is prone to nonsense so it works around, and behind your conscious mind to help it learn, grow, and mature. It works to teach it to level, and take on more and more accountability over time.

What do you know… your unconscious mind is engaged in Changework… on your conscious mind? As a human in the world, neurophysiology is everything. This is how the mind is able to interact with the world. The exact location of the interaction of mind and world is body.

This is the part of your neurophysiology that actually touches, and moves around in the world. Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, and movement are the tools you use. Your body is the vehicle your nervous system uses to perceive the world, and then interact with it. This is where life acts, creates, and matures. It's more accurate to say that your neurophysiology, your mind, isn't separate from the world at all.

Mind, neurophysiology, body, world… this is all one. A single whole system. You cannot possibly see or understand the pieces in isolation. Mind, neurophysiology, body, world… each is changed by, and changes the other. The is a complex, non-linear, and autonomous system.

The only way to talk about mind, or brain, or body, or the world is to talk about distinctions/divisions that aren't really there. At least not in the way we think they are. We want to believe that we are conscious, independent entities, in control of our life. We want to believe that we're more than a constellation of unconscious, habitual and archetypal strategies acting in the world.

We want to believe we are a self, a personality. We want to believe we're independent of the world, and unique in reality. We want to believe we're conscious persons, with agency, and free will, in control of our past, present and future.

We want to believe this in spite of quite a bit of evidence suggesting that much of this isn't true, or at least isn't true in the way we think it is, or want it to be. Consider this for a moment. What if you don't have a personality, identity or self? What if you're a nervous system in the world, functioning largely unconsciously, in an effort to cope and survive? The initial response to this idea will usually emerge as defensiveness.

Your specialness is panicked over the idea that "you" might not be real. "You", might not be permanent. And, this feels like an existential crisis looking for a place to happen. So, most of us are more than happy to go on believing we're a "person", a unique constellation of experiences,

desires and dreams. What would be the point of your existence otherwise? That's a great question, what would be the point? The point is that if you're not a self, personality, or identity… you're free. Free to be anything you wish to be at any time. Free to change at any the life you're living at any time. Consider that for a moment.

You're free to learn, change, and become anything. Everything that you believe… all your pain, all your memories, all your needs, all your desires, all your love… it's all stuff you're carrying around out of learning, habit, or choice. Think of it like you're an empty bucket.

You move through life filling your bucket with all kinds of experiences, ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. And anything in your bucket you believe is real, and part of who you are. But the truth is that it's just a bucket. You can dump what you want, add what you want, and change what you want at any time.

You can actually invent yourself, every moment. There is no fixed identity like a self. You are the empty bucket, not the contents. That's what it is to be alive and free. The idea of self or personality is a construction that you have to choose to participate in. If you believe it's real, then it's real.

Whatever you believe you are… you are. The degree, to which you believe, is the degree to which you remain exactly that. This is what the uniqueness of self and personality gives you. You get a guarantee that meaningful change and growth will be a struggle. If your intention is to help another person change, you do it physiology first. In other words, move the body.

The body is the vehicle that allows the neurophysiology to act in the world. It's the bridge where the unconscious mind can act on, and be acted on by the world. Change what the body is doing right now and every aspect of the pattern/strategy/system will begin to change.

Do you remember earlier when I had you raise your hands over your head like you were crossing a finish line while you remembered that movie? I hope you really did it, because this is where you display competency. Do it again right now... for about 30 seconds. I'll wait. Did you feel it again? That's right.

You moved your body, you changed your physiology, and everything connected to it changed. Your emotions, mood, and cognition, all changed when you put your hands up. Not only that, but here's what you should do next. The next time you feel frustration, stress, or worry put your hands up like that for 20 seconds.

I promise you this will change your life. Feel stress, hands up. Feel worry, hands up. Within a week, your life will be different. It will be different because you'll use your body, to teach the rest of your neurophysiology to feel, think, and do something different when you feel stressed/worried. Try it... really... commit right now... do it.

See what happens. Change physiology first. Let's do one more activity to make this point stick. This next exercise is a bit complicated to don't be afraid to read the whole section then go back and do it. You may have to read and try, then read and try again. It doesn't matter how you do it. Work your way through this exercise. It will be worth your time.

Sit comfortably and turn your head slowly to the right. Turn till you comfortably hit the limit of your function. Do that very slowly, a couple times… slowly. Really feel the turn. Feel your whole body cooperate, or not. Feel the joints and muscles shift, and move. Feels when you turn and reach your comfortable limit, and stop… good.

Bring your head slowly back to a neutral center point. Now do the same thing to the left… slowly. But just turn ONE time. Same process. Take all the time you need to feel the turn, and then stop at the comfortable limit. Don't' try to do anything specific. Just focus on feeling your body do what it does, or doesn't do.

Now slowly return your head to the center neutral position again. Rest for a moment, then when you're ready, turn it slowly to the right, and come to the limit. Now just breathe and relax your neck and shoulders. While you breathe in and out, with your hands hanging at your sides, turn your right hand counterclockwise until the palm almost faces away from your body.

Make sure your hand is resting comfortably while you do this. At the same time, take your left hand and turn it counterclockwise until your palm faces upward. Again, make sure it's resting comfortably as you do it. Breathe several times and relax even more.

If you're doing this in a slow and comfortable way, you'll notice that your neck will relax, and your head will probably turn further than it did only moments before. Notice this. Take your time. Really allow you to relax, and feel what your head and neck are doing. Now, turn your head slowly back to center neutral again.

Now, easily, and slowly, turn your head to the right. Feel how it turns further, and more comfortably. Feel how it simply relaxes, and allows for easier motion, and a more comfortable movement. Move slowly, come back to the middle. Turn easily again. Notice the difference from your first turn. Enjoy the change. Good work.

Now, in your mind only, with your head facing forward, with no large movement at all, imagine yourself in your mind turning your head to the left. Feel what your muscles will do. See and feel in your mind as you turn, and reach the comfortable limit.

Now, see and feel how you would turn your left hand to the right (clockwise) until the palm was almost to the left. See and feel how you would turn the right hand to the right (clockwise) until the palm faces upward. See and feel in your mind only… no, or very little, actual movement.

See and feel your breathing, and how your neck would relax and comfortably turn further. Really see and feel yourself doing all this, in your mind, comfortably and easily. Now in your mind, bring your head back to center neutral. Clear your mind… just rest for a moment and relax. doesn't do.

Now slowly return your head to the center neutral position again. Rest for a moment, then when you're ready, turn it slowly to the right, and come to the limit. Now just breathe and relax your neck and shoulders. While you breathe in and out, with your hands hanging at your sides, turn your right hand counterclockwise until the palm almost faces away from your body.

Make sure your hand is resting comfortably while you do this. At the same time, take your left hand and turn it counterclockwise until your palm faces upward. Again, make sure it's resting comfortably as you do it. Breathe several times and relax even more.

If you're doing this in a slow and comfortable way, you'll notice that your neck will relax, and your head will probably turn further than it did only moments before. Notice this. Take your time. Really allow you to relax, and feel what your head and neck are doing. Now, turn your head slowly back to center neutral again.

Very good. Now, really, slowly turn your head to the left, and see what happens. Let me guess. The turn was much easier and further than the last time… correct? Maybe even weirdly easier. Do it a couple times to check it out. Maybe check the other side again. After you check, just come back to center neutral.

Now, take a moment, and realize two important somethings. When you turned your head to the right, you used your body, to teach your neurophysiology. And realize that when you turned left, you used your neurophysiology to teach your body. Interesting, huh? The unconscious mind is an aspect of your neurophysiology, and you can work from either end of the system to teach it.

It's not the mysterious iceberg that you once believed. It's a very real system of functions with a "brain" on one end, a body-in-the-world on the other, and a bunch of interesting stuff in the middle. The process is changeable from either end, and since you asked, it's changeable in the middle as well. But if you want a person to change right now, you

change physiology first. This is the quickest and easiest way to start the change process. Everything we've spoken about so far, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors are the tools you use to help another person's neurophysiology to learn, change, and mature.

This is what change is, and what change has to be. Helping someone change, is helping their neurophysiology to learn, change, and mature. A focus on anything other than the neurophysiology, and we're dealing with the conscious mind like it's in charge, when in reality it's not.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it's a zero-sum game, and it won't take the other person into learning and change.

Learning Points:

1. You don't have a separate brain, and body. You have a nervous system. Your neurophysiology.
2. What we often call the unconscious, can be understood as the functioning of the nervous system that is outside our awareness.
3. Your neurophysiology is part of, and connected to the world you live in.
4. You may not be the "self" or "identity" you think you are.

Questions:

Can you recall an experience or situation in which you “forgot” about past negative experiences and what you did surprised even you?

Action Plan:

This week, every time you feel worried or concerned, make fists and put your hands up like you’re crossing the finish line. Stay in that position for at least 30 seconds, and with each breath, fill your body with that good feeling. Like you’re filling a balloon. Really do this… see what happens.

35 Who, when and where

Now that we've talked about the process of Changework, and a bit about the skills necessary to do it, you might be asking yourself if Changework is the right choice for all people, or all situations. And you're right to consider this. There are people who shouldn't, or can't, utilize Changework. The easiest way to define this group, is to say that Changework is most useful for normal people, with normal problems.

Let's take a moment and clarify what are normal people with normal problems. Since people are more alike than not, normal people make up most of the population, and normal problems make up most of the complaints that people have about their lives.

To fall outside these normal limits, a person would have to have a medical or developmental issue that interferes with their normal neurocognitive functioning, and/or their ability experience normal emotional responses. Normal neurocognitive function is necessary for a normal perception of reality.

It's necessary if you're to perceive the world, and the feedback you receive from it, as it is. And it's also necessary if you're going to process the information you perceive. Very simply, your brain and nervous system have to be functioning normally for you perceive reality, move

through the bell curve of change, and then learn from your experiences. Normal neurocognitive function is also necessary if you're to experience normal emotional responses. It's necessary if you're going to experience, process, and regulate emotion. If your brain, and nervous system aren't functioning normally, it can have a negative impact on any one of these aspects of emotional experience.

It's important to note that the system doesn't have to be completely broken. Even a mild level of organic dysfunction would be enough to make learning from your experiences difficult. As we've discussed earlier, many people hold beliefs and engage in patterns of function, that impact how they perceive the world, and their emotional responses to it.

But these challenges are exactly that, universal, generalized, archetypal patterns of function, and not organic neurocognitive or emotional impairment caused by medical, or developmental issues. It's important to recognize that there's a difference.

Examples of what could interfere with an individual's normal function include medical issues such as infection, cardiac issues, pulmonary issues, metabolic issues, acute addiction, cognitive impairment, and pain just to list a few broad categories. These medical issues, as well as others can, and often do, impact the functioning of the brain as well as the entire nervous system to some degree.

And through their impact on the functioning of your neurophysiology, they also impact your ability to experience normal emotional responses to reality.

This same organic impairment can also be caused by certain medical treatments, as well as certain medications. Treatments for issues such as cancer, can easily impact normal neurophysiological functioning. This is also true of individual medications such as antipsychotic's, anticonvulsants, analgesics, opiates and stimulants, as they often have an impact on neurophysiology through this their ability to experience normal emotional responses to reality.

Developmental issues will also impact normal neurophysiological function in ways that can alter a person's perceptions of reality. Developmental issues that could impact normal function would include, intellectual impairment, neurocognitive impairment, autism, and fetal alcohol disorders to name just a few.

Some of these issues can be overcome with time, education and training but this varies from individual to individual. Certain severe and/or persistent mental health issues can have a profound impact on normal neurophysiological function and normal emotion response.

Psychotic illness such as schizophrenia and other disorders with significant psychotic features including paranoia, delusions and hallucinations make it very challenging to perceive reality as it is, and then process it. These disorders, their symptoms, and their treatments will often impact a person's ability to experience normal emotion as well.

Finally, disorders causing affect dysregulation such as significant frontal systems dysfunction, as well as full manic episodes can impact normal neurophysiological functioning.

Any disorder having a significant enough impact on frontal cognitive systems can cause difficulty perceiving, processing, and self-regulating emotion. It's certainly possible that Changework might be able to provide some assistance to people who are experiencing medical, developmental or severe mental health issues.

Having said that, training in Changework, gives serious time, and consideration, to correct scope of practice. Issues that are medical, developmental, or the product of severe mental illness, should be referred to licensed professionals in those areas.

A great deal of time is spent ensuring that Changwork providers understand when to refer to the appropriate clinical professional and how. The only way that Changeworkers should ever consider operating outside normal limits, is with the collaboration of, and supervision of, an appropriate licensed professional.

Even normal people with normal problems can struggle with the Changework process. And most of this struggle is due to reasons that you probably already understand. To engage in Changework, you have to choose to do it. As we've spoken about already, you have to be able to say you have a problem, that what you think and feel about the problem aren't changing it, and then you have to ask for help.

This seems simple when you look at it, but a struggle with one of these three points, is very often what prevents people from choosing to participate in Changework. It's also very often what will cause a Changeworker to decline to engage with a potential client.

Doing Changework is a choice, and a commitment on the part of the patient, and on the part of the Changeworker. It can't be a maybe, or something that you're going to try. Remember the Karate Kid. You Changework do... guess so, get the squish, just like grape.

Again, this seems simple, but of all the people screened by a Changework provider, there will always be a percentage of them that either aren't ready, or are outside the scope of practice. At times, neurocognitive function is the concern. Other times, the person's life, and world, may simply be too stressed, or chaotic for them to really commit to the process.

In these cases, an experienced Changeworker will often delay engaging with that person until they're capable of making the necessary commitment. To engage in Changework, your neurocognitive functioning needs to be within normal limits and your ability to experience emotion also has to be within normal limits.

The process of Changework is challenging, and difficulties acknowledging reality, and processing it will only make it more so. Potential clients must be able to perceive reality in a normal way, to move through the bell curve of change, all the way to learning. The same is true for emotional experience.

Potential clients need to be able to experience, process, and regulate their emotion to move through the learning process. Normal learning depends on normal neurocognitive function. If you're reading this, and still wondering, "what's normal?", think big picture. We don't address

this question by looking to the details of a specific person's experience, and we certainly don't answer this question by some diagnostic criteria. By "normal", we mean what common sense would suggest is normal. And remember, normal is a range of function. There isn't a single correct definition.

If you're still wondering about normal, what would your grandparents or you parents have said to you about it? That should help to clear it up. If it doesn't, there's a chance that you're too far into fact/detail regarding the question, or the person you're thinking of is actually in a grey area regarding normal function.

No matter how we look at it, there will be the occasional person who may seem to be in a grey area. The Changeworker might suspect that there's a medical, developmental or mental health issue that could be impacting the process, but they're uncertain.

When this is the case, it's usually best to refer the person on to a medical or mental health professional, for assessment.

Learning Points:

1. Changework is most effective for normal people with normal problems. In order to participate in Changework, you need to have normal neurocognitive functioning and normal emotional experience, processing, and regulation.
2. The question of who is appropriate for Changework can seem complicated. These issues are covered thoroughly by your trainer during the learning process.

Questions:

Think of the people you interact with on a daily basis. Do they seem to be normal people with normal problems?

How many of them could be happier or more successful if you taught them what you're learning?

Action Plan:

What is the most important action you've taken as you learned this material? What did you do or do differently that moved you toward what you wanted? Pick a person in your world that you think could use the same lesson. Tell them about what you did and how it went. When you tell you're your story, use the structure of change from the Schwab book. Encourage them to try something similar. Notice how this goes.

36 Ethics

Learning the skills that we're talking about changed my life. I'm an academically trained counseling psychologist, with more than two decades of practice under my belt. But I've been lucky in many ways. I've been lucky enough to have spent my entire career in the for-profit sector of mental health.

Most mental health operations of any size in the U.S., whether they're part of a health system, or community based, are not-for-profit. They're not-for-profit, because they don't understand how to operate as a for-profit business, without going bankrupt by the end of the month.

I've been lucky enough to spend my entire adult life engaged in mental health operations that had to make enough money to not only pay the bills, but also make a profit. Having to be responsible for payroll, operational costs, and a profit margin, have given me a dedication to a single guiding principle.

Effectiveness and efficiency are everything. Every single idea, approach, program, and clinician has to prove its effectiveness and its efficiency, and it has to do it pronto. No excuses, no rationalizations and no denial. It either works or works well, or it has to change. If it doesn't, or won't change, it has to go. My belief in effectiveness, and efficiency forced me

to learn something that I now recognize as amazing. It forced me to learn that it was ok to be wrong. And more than ok, it was almost always a good thing. It made me absolutely fall in love with the idea that I could be wrong, about anything… and that this is awesome. I might be completely wrong about everything.

I might have no idea what I'm talking about…right now. The very things that I hold dear, the beliefs that I'm absolutely certain about at this moment, may be wrong. Everything I think and do, has to prove itself in the real world every moment of every day.

My love affair with being comfortably wrong has given me the freedom to learn, and then change quickly and easily. I'm free to actually stop doing what I was doing a moment ago, and do something different. Without my comfort being wrong, I never would have searched for something better.

I never would have taken the risks to find what worked. And I never would have used what worked when it was presented to me. The ability to embrace being wrong, made me able to actually learn something, grow and become more useful. I'm hoping that whatever your ethical position, you understand that the answer to the question of how to learn, change, and grow will only be found in what you do wrong.

Your mistakes will be the best opportunities to learn. No one ever learned, changed, and grew guided by what they did right. If our ethics are going to be useful, which is what ethics are supposed to be, they must be built around the idea that our mistakes are the only opportunity we have to learn, change, grow and mature.

This notion has to underly any ethics you might have… otherwise, whatever you have, is probably not ethics. It would be a form of control. Regarding the helping professions this is exactly the case. Ethics in the mental health field are in reality a list of rules that are enforced by threat of punishment if you deviate.

So let's be clear on one thing. This isn't really ethics. This is behavioral control through threat of punishment. I believe this is why the field is moving from the idea of a "Code of Ethics", to a "Code of Conduct". At least we're trying to get the label right. B

ut the tragedy at the end of this situation is that fear of punishment is an absolute guarantee that the field of mental health can't explore its own perceptions, challenge what it believes, and grow over time as a result of its mistakes. Any real interest in what ethics are supposed to be stops right there.

The ideas presented here are incredibly important to me and I hope they'll become important to you. I want them to be the most important ideas you've ever learned… ever. I'm taking a risk giving these ideas to you. You may agree or disagree. You may think I have no idea what I'm talking about. But the risk is worth it to me.

I believe in you. Without the risk… we have nothing of any value, and we go nowhere. The risk to be wrong, to try something new, is everything. The risk to search for something more effective, and useful for each other, is everything. When this is done with a focus on what's best for others, it's an unqualified good. I want us to have a conversation about human change and how we need to do it differently.

I want to challenge your position on the ethics of this field, as well as your sense of responsibility for yourself, and your work. If you've been reading carefully, I would suspect that you've already picked up on some of the ethical implications of what I've been saying. So let's make these implications obvious, and then take them even further.

But remember, take the risk to look for something more useful than what you already have. Recognize that psychotherapy, as it's currently taught and used, has no real responsibility for the client, or their outcome. It's more than happy to accept money for a service that frequently goes nowhere, and results in nothing useful.

And, it openly refuses any real accountability for this state of affairs. When confronted with accountability the field will blame the client. You will hear it the way they avoid responsibility. You will hear "The client is resistant", or "The client lacks insight", long before you'll hear "I wasn't effective enough to get them where they needed to go".

I'm suggesting that the clinician has to be accountable, and responsible for the client's outcome. A reasonable level of accountability. Not 100% but certainly more than 50%. If you can't commit to more than 50% accountability, why are you even in the field? If you won't commit to more than 50%, you're either dodging accountability, have no real belief in your own ability to help, or, just in this to cash checks.

It's one of the three. As a Changeworker you must take accountability. You must have a set of skills that allow you to accept responsibility for the outcome of another person. This is the ONLY real ethical principle that matters.

I want to say this again. THIS IS THE ONLY REAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLE THAT MATTERS. Ethics built on this single idea would be very different. The clinician would suddenly have skin in the game. (Shout out here to Nassim Taleb who taught me to see not only this, but much more.

If you haven't read his work, you should) they would suddenly have real accountability. I see this as a good thing. This one idea, more than 50%, and less than 100%, would fix the field of human change almost overnight.

If taking money for a service made you accountable, like it does in EVERY OTHER market transaction in the universe, then the only services you would find available at the end of next week, would be effective and efficient. I believe that this would be a very good thing, regardless of whether I would be working next week or not.

This idea would also require us to address another issue... the refund. If you take money to provide a service, and you can't deliver, how can you ethically keep that money? Wouldn't it be far more ethical to have some kind of policy regarding refunds when you can't achieve a reasonable, agreed upon outcome? I think it does.

Again, EVERY OTHER market service has a reasonable expectation of refund for services not provided, or partially provided. Why does mental health, as well as medicine get a pass on this? It's almost like we know where this would go. How about the fact that the only valid measure of the worth of a service, or a service provider, is the testimony of people who have received a service from them. This is the logical conclusion in EVERY OTHER part of the free market. EVER OTHER part.

Mental health is one of the very few aspects of the market that demands immunity from this. Psychology, like medicine, and education, suggest that all information is private, and has to be confidential to "protect" the people involved.

This protection seems to be necessary, even when the person who paid for the service is willing to share the information. Why would we deny the market it's ONLY true way to insure effective and efficient services for everyone? It's almost as though there are some concerns about the field's effectiveness and efficiency.

It's almost like we know where this would go. I promised you earlier that we would talk some more about manipulation, persuasion and influence. So, let's do that now. If psychotherapy doesn't really have the scientific backing that it suggests it has, why continue to believe otherwise?

If there are other approaches, ideas, or perspectives that suggest they could be effective, why shouldn't we be discussing them? Manipulation, persuasion, and influence by any definition you want to give them, are alive and well. The ideas, concepts, and practices that would fall under any of these three headings are used EVERYWHERE else in your life.

In fact, they're used on you constantly from every direction. The tsunami of manipulation, persuasion and influence has become so pervasive that most of the time you're completely disinterested in what's happening and who's doing it to you. You move through your life and simply except that it's happening, and you accept responsibility for

yourself as it's happening. This intense concern/fear that psychology and the culture as a whole has about the evils of manipulation, persuasion, and influence appears to be a cop out. It's another way to avoid having to learn and change.

If you don't really want to change, or don't really want to be held accountable you need to steer clear of anything, anyone, and anyplace where it might happen to you when you're not looking. We don't fear manipulation, persuasion, and influence.

We say we do, because we hate it when we find ourselves in a position where we have to take accountability for ourselves, or be forced to look stupid, weak, hypocritical, silly, crazy, etc. Manipulation, persuasion, and influence are often the tools used to paint us into corners that we then can't get out of, without taking accountability for what we think, feel, said, and did.

And being required to take accountability for your life sucks. Coincidentally, it also makes change more likely. The skills of manipulation, persuasion, and influence are always in play whether we admit to it or not. Manipulation is always going to be part of any interaction with a goal.

This is true no matter what, and no matter where. The only thing that matters is INTENTION. The intention of the person using the skills. Is this person mature, others focused, with more than 50% responsibility for an agreed upon outcome? Or, are they cloaked in superiority, righteousness and able to avoid accountability for their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

I'm suggesting that intention is everything. Your intensions are either positive, or focused on the other person, and their outcome, or you're not. Sure, it won't protect you from mistakes, but those are inevitable anyway. You're forced, required, commanded even to accept accountability for yourself in every other facet of your life.

Manipulation, persuasion, and influence are coming at you 24/7 from every conceivable source, regardless of what you do. It's everywhere and unavoidable. And the whole world, expects you to realize this, and accept responsibility for yourself in the face of it. But somehow, when engaged in psychotherapy, the manipulation, persuasion, and influence are so powerful, and toxic, that you can't possibly be accountable for yourself any longer. Really… this is the logic.

Given what we know about psychology, and how powerful it is, or isn't why aren't we discussing this? The notion that psychology, psychotherapy, or any other aspect of the mental health field is so powerfully effective that you can't be expected to take responsibility for yourself while engaged in it should be startling to you.

Yes, there are people whose grasp of reality is problematic, or they're experiencing emotional overwhelm. Yes, we should exercise appropriate accountability for this. Even though the vast majority of the world around them will continue to FORCE them to be responsible for themselves regardless of their condition or diagnosis.

There are also people with medical issues, developmental issues, intellectual deficits, or some other form of legitimate vulnerability that requires protection and we must be accountable for this.

But the rest of us, the remaining vast majority of us, are required to be responsible for ourselves in every other facet of our lives. Maybe it's time we talked about taking this responsibility the rest of the way. Maybe, just maybe, this responsibility isn't the problem... it's the solution.

Let me make this idea even clearer. If everything you said to yourself in your head was suddenly audible to everyone around you, I'm willing to bet we would see a significant improvement in whatever your primary complaint is, within say... 48 hours. Why... because you would be forced to take accountability for it by the real world around you.

And very shortly after that, you would double down on your strategy or surrender, learn and change. And if you doubled down, you would soon discover that reality still wouldn't have it. You would quickly learn, change, grow and mature. This is what responsibility for you will do.

It's time right now. It's time we grew up, took responsibility for ourselves, and then had the long and difficult discussions about human change that we need to have. What works and what doesn't... honestly.

A change process where people are accountable, and considered capable of encountering the same mechanisms of change that we encounter in every other aspect of our life. This would be a solid first step toward something we could call ethics.

Learning Points:

1. Mistakes are the best opportunity you have to learn, change and mature.
2. If we want to focus on useful ethics for the helping professions, we need to talk about clinician accountability, refunds and the use of testimonial statements.
3. Manipulation, persuasion, and influence are unavoidable... and useful.

Questions:

Can you think of two big mistakes that you made, that positively changed the way you acted in the world?

Action Plans

For the next few weeks, whenever you make a mistake, take a breath and move around some. Then level with whoever you need to over what happened. Notice what's different when you do this.

37 And another thing... or two

By this point, I hope you're intrigued. I hope you're curious about the idea that there's another way to think about change. I hope you're excited about the fact that there's a set of skills out there that can make you more effective at helping people make a decision, take action, learn, change, and mature regardless of the work you do.

I hope you realize, right now that this door is open to you. It's open if you're ready to focus on the other person first. It's open if you're ready to learn how to tolerate frustrated desire alone. And it's open if you're sincerely ready to take the responsibility for helping another person achieve their outcome. Are you ready?

The way science has been dealing with human change for the last hundred years or so, isn't giving us a set of effective skills, and it isn't moving us toward maturity. In the past, the collective wisdom of our culture provided a safety net that would help people self-correct, and move toward maturity as they interacted with the world.

But that net disappeared some time ago. We've come to the point where taking your medication, avoiding anything you don't want to experience, and ranting on social medica, is our preferred collective coping strategy. And it appears that we simply can't conceive of a useful way to change what we're doing.

As a group, and a culture we have to surrender into the idea that the tools we've been using to help people change, simply aren't what they say they are. After the entire peer reviewed research, the theories produced, and the tools that come with them do little but offer a vague promise of help.

And now the field of change actually reinforces the very attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that will make change almost impossible. We simply can't go on this way. As a culture we're more unhappy, anxious, angry, resentful, and immature then we've ever been.

We refuse to learn, change, get along with each other, or tolerate anything, or anyone we don't agree with. We walked away from the universal human wisdom that would have allowed us to learn, change, and mature, and now we've been gone so long that we don't even know where we are.

It's time to grow up. It's time to do the hard work. It's time to think about something, anything, other than ourselves, and our own needs and wants. The whole point of this book is that there is a way out. The skills, the structures, and the practices are out there. We've just been told that what we have now is the only answer, and that anything other than what we have now, is either harmful or dangerous.

We have to start with a deep breath, and then a surrender into the idea there are other skills sets out there that have a long history of supporting human beings as they learn, change, and mature. But to engage this, we have to accept the idea that being effective at helping people change has no connection to education level, field of study, or

level of licensure. We have to completely accept the idea that a minimally trained paraprofessional is just as effective as a trained and licensed, mental health clinician… from the patient's point of view. And the patient's point of view is the ONLY POINT OF VIEW THAT MATTERS.

As a culture and as individuals we've constructed a collective delusion for ourselves. Inside this delusion, we all get to feel special, smart, and powerful any time we want. We get to focus on ourselves at all times, and we can refuse any meaningful contact with reality.

We no longer have to take feedback from the world around us, and in fact we can refuse and then criminalize any experience we don't wish to have. If I don't like it, it's wrong. And not just wrong, but harmful and bad. The result of all this, is that we're no longer reliably able to learn, change, and mature.

We've simply backed ourselves into a delusional corner where the universal, generalized, and archetypal wisdom of human life no longer has any value or use for us. And the universal human learning experiences, that reality tries to offer to us each day can no longer reach us. Psychology, medicine, and really, the entire mental health field have little help for us.

In fact, they seem to have defected to the side of delusion where they now spend most of their time reinforcing the very attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that make change largely impossible. They appear to have willingly joined in the delusion, and at this point in time there are only a handful of voices in the field suggesting that something's wrong.

Let alone voices suggesting that there's something different that might change all this in a useful way. We've become blind to, afraid of, angry at, and resentful of, the very things that could help us. This is the price we're paying for our collective delusion. The goal of this book is nothing less than a paradigm shift.

If the field of human change is to have any validity or integrity in the future, we have to surrender into, and accept two things. First, the dominant perspective in the field of change whatever you think that might be, isn't any more effective than a minimally trained paraprofessional.

We can go on, and argue about certain bits of the field that might be effective, and that's certainly an argument worth having, but the fact remains. The field of psychology, and entire field of mental health is not what it claims to be, and doesn't deliver what it claims to deliver. And second, there are ideas, perceptions, and skills outside the field of psychology that do demonstrate effectiveness at helping others change.

The reason they can display effectiveness is that they're not the product of academic science. They're not built on the myths of psychology, and in fact never really took them seriously. Rather, these other perspectives: marketing, advertising, sales, drama, film, TV, public relations, propaganda, criminal behavior, the con, magic, hypnosis, etc., were all practices built in the real world.

They were born and developed in the world of people where they took real feedback, paid a real price for failure, and as a result they really become effective at the process of getting another human being to

make a decision, act, learn, change and mature. Put another way none of these folks continued to get paid, if what they did didn't work. This is exactly why they became effective, and it's exactly why they deserve our respect and attention. The process, any process of helping another person change is just never going to be "scientific".

There's no escaping this fact. People don't change because of theory, research data, reason, logic or conversation. They never have, and they never will. Human change is always, and only, the product of universal, general, archetypal experience. As a result of these experiences, and the feedback we get from reality, we learn, change and mature.

This perspective, and the wisdom contained in it have been part of the human experience as long as there have been humans. Reality based emotional experience, resulting in learning, change and maturity, are the keys out of the room we've locked ourselves into. We aren't going to escape the prison we've built without coming to terms with this.

We have to bring universal, generalized, archetypal, learning back into the foundation of human change. And we have to acknowledge that we used to know this, and that it worked. For generation after generation, we understood this, and surrendered into it every day. It was expected of us, and we accepted this.

But at some point we decided that collectively we wanted to take the easy way out, and never have to be responsible for ourselves ever again. We desperately need this paradigm shift. A recognition that we need to look to the fields, crafts, and practices outside psychology.

We need to look at these fields, apply what they offer, and see what works. We keep what does, and we leave the rest. We have to recognize that the process of human change will always be more art than it's ever going to be science. The idea that the human being, and by extension, human behavior is simple enough to be altered by specified science based intervention is something we need to finally leave behind.

If the mental health, and helping fields are going to continue to suggest that they're interested in being effective they need to step away from the idea that that the process of human change requires graduate education and licensure. The skills are out there for anyone who wishes to make the effort, and take them in.

Human change is human change is human change. It has nothing to do with education, field of study or licensure. Anyone willing to put the time in, and learn the skills can apply them anywhere they are. This is an invitation. An invitation for you, to make a decision and act. An invitation to surrender some old ideas, and step into something new.

An invitation to become excited about new possibilities and a new future. It's an invitation to change the world, one person at a time. Are you ready to make a decision and act?

---------- End ----------