



## Module Eight: It's ALL Behavior, Or Is It Perception?

Last week we talked about total behavior and this week I want to teach you how everything is behavior! First you learn the components of Choice Theory separately, now you will learn to put them back together again, understanding them as the sum of all the parts. Add up Quality World pictures, Perceptions, Comparing Place, Creative System and Total Behavior and what you get is Total Behavior. Add them up a different way and what you get is Perception. Here's how.

### **Total Behavior**

Let's examine how it can be possible that everything is behavior. First, the strength of your needs is genetic. This is pretty much programmed at birth, according to William Glasser. The Quality World is a place where you store pictures of things that are need-satisfying and feel extremely positive to you. Accessing a Quality World picture is nothing more than thinking about it. Thinking is a component of Total Behavior.

When you think of a Quality World picture, you also engage in actions, have emotions of pleasure and experience certain physiology. Therefore, accessing Quality World pictures is a total behavior.

Let's look at perception. What is perception if not thinking? Our perceptions are our thoughts about what we encounter in the Real World. Thoughts are always accompanied with actions, feelings and physiology, making perception a total behavior too.

In the Comparing Place, people are weighing what they want from their Quality World with what they perceive they are getting from Real World. This is also a behavior. It is a process of evaluating two or more things. This is obviously a mental activity involving thinking, but as a total behavior there are also actions, feeling and physiology associated with it. You may be thinking about what you want, sitting, feeling badly and having a stomach ache. The process of comparing or self-evaluating is a total behavior, as well.

Then, when we are working in our Behavioral System to formulate and consider our options, we are engaging in a Total Behavior, too. Assessing one's options requires actions, thoughts, accompanying emotions and physiology.

After choosing the best behavior, we act out our best choice in a Total Behavior--we know that's behavior. Therefore, when you look at the Choice Theory model, everything is behavior.

This is important because we know Choice Theory is the new psychology of personal freedom. How does one gain personal freedom? By focusing on things a person can control--his or her own behavior. If it's all behavior, then look at all the options a person has control over. You can change your perceptions, adjust or add a Quality World picture, evaluate the balance from a new angle, assess your options differently or create a new behavior, and then choose or act out a different total behavior. There is a lot you can change without attempting to get into that powerless place of trying to change other people.

### **Perception**

To make things a little more interesting, I also want you to think about how just as everything is behavior, it is also perception. Perception is what we understand about the Real World through our total knowledge and our valuing filters.

Let's look at Quality World pictures. They are nothing more than perception. You are accessing your memories and perceiving the ones that are most satisfying to you. You perceive what, of all you know, are things you want in a particular moment.

Obviously, the Perceived World is perception. It is the system we use to make sense of the Real World. Perception is how we learn and how we determine what we like and don't like.

In the Comparing Place, we compare Quality World pictures with our perception of what we are getting from the Real World. This comparison results in a perception of balance or imbalance. We perceive whether we are getting what we want or whether we aren't. This is also a perception.

And then when we go to the Behavioral System to examine our options or create new ones, this too involves perception. We must perceive the choices available to us and also perceive when it is necessary to create novel behavioral choices.

Finally, when we act out a total behavior, perception is part of that process. Remember all behavior has a thinking component. Within our thinking we perceive what we do and the effect it has on the world.

So, do you think I shared this information with you for the sole purpose of confusing you? No! It's simply that when you first learn Choice Theory, you learn all the individual and separate components of the theory. It seems like a separate and discrete process of interacting in the world.

And then, as you develop a deeper and more integrated understanding, you realize that the process isn't separate components at all. You understand that because all behavior is purposeful and all behavior has four component parts, that everything you do (your actions, your thinking,

your feelings and your physiology) are created by your Behavioral System in your best attempt at that time to get something you want and your perception is involved every step of the way.

Why is this important? Well, it's important to understand that everyone is doing their best to get things that are in their Quality World. It's also important to know that not only actions move us toward the things we want. Thoughts, emotions and our body's physiology can also move us toward what we want, as well.

An example of thinking moving you toward a goal is what research tells us about positive thinking. Well-respected studies show that positive thinking can lead to better coping skills, decreased negative stress and even higher immunity to the common cold. Positive thinking, or believing in what is possible, can help us move in the direction of a challenging, meaningful goal.

Your emotions serve as a signal to let you know if your scales are in or out of balance. When you are getting what you want, you are happy. When you aren't, you are sad. And when you feel threatened, you may experience fear or anxiety.

These emotions are often thought of as a reaction to certain situations in our lives. Choice Theory would instead have you think about what you are trying to gain through the use of certain emotions. Emotions can control others so we get what we want. They can help us gain control over the situation. Emotions can excuse us from certain responsibilities. They can get us the attention we need. They can keep us safe. There are many things we can gain from using our emotions. To be clear, this does not mean a person is aware of how they are choosing and using their emotions. To most people, emotions feels as if they just "happen" to us, instead of viewing them as a tool to help us gain something we want. Only people who really integrate Choice Theory in their lives understand emotions as one component of a total behavior chosen to get the person something important to him or her.

And finally, your body's physiology is part of the total behavior, also designed to help you get something you want. For example, when you are cold and you desire to warm up, your body will shiver. When you are hot and you desire cooling down, your body will sweat. Usually you are unaware of your body's physiology, just as you are unaware of your creation of your emotions. However, bringing these things into your conscious awareness helps you become less of a victim and be more proactive.

Dr. Glasser says, "It is almost impossible for anyone, even the most ineffective among us, to continue to choose misery after becoming aware that it is a choice." This is not about blaming the victim, but rather about empowering the victim to understand he or she can choose to do things differently if he or she wants to.

And the point about everything being perception is made so people can understand that perception is a very unique, individual experience. Your perception may not be shared by others. That doesn't mean you are wrong or another person who perceives differently from you is wrong. It simply means you are viewing and experiencing the situation differently.

This is important as we proceed so you do not create value judgments about another person's perceptions. Everyone perceives the world through their different and unique total knowledge filters and valuing filters. This doesn't make anyone "wrong," just different.

One key to using Choice Theory and developing positive relationships is to understand people can do and think differently than you do and it really is all right. You do not have to insist on those in your life thinking and acting the same as you would in a similar situation.

So this lesson is to remind you that everything that is done, thought, felt and done automatically by our bodies is purposeful. Secondly, it was designed to help you develop acceptance for differing views other than your own.

**Conclusion:**

Your assignment this week is to think of a behavior you have engaged in recently that you don't necessarily like about yourself. Answer the questions on the Behavior Perception worksheet regarding this behavior and your perceptions. The goal is to begin thinking of even your undesirable behavior as purposeful and to begin seeking solutions that are within your power to control.