

Volume XLIII  
No. 1

Fall 2023

International Journal of  
Choice Theory® and  
Reality Therapy



# The International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy: An On-line Journal

## Volume XLIII, No. 1, Fall, 2023

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## **Introduction to the Journal Editor and to the Editorial Board:**

### **IJCTRT Editor:**

The Editor of the Journal is **Dr. Thomas S. Parish**, who is an Emeritus Professor at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. He earned his Ph.D. in human development and developmental psychology at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. He's CTCT certified and has authored or co-authored more than 350 articles that have appeared in more than 30 professional refereed journals. Dr. Parish and his wife recently served as consultants, for the LDS Family Services Group in Independence, MO, and they currently co-own Parish Mental Health and Life Coaching of Topeka, Kansas. **Any correspondence, including questions and/or manuscript submissions should be sent to [parishts@gmail.com](mailto:parishts@gmail.com)** You may also contact him by phone at: (785) 845-2044, (785) 861-7261, or (785) 862-1379. In addition, a website is currently available. It can be accessed by going to: [www.wglasserinternational.org](http://www.wglasserinternational.org) Notably, the Journal is no longer password protected on the WGI website, so now anyone can gain access to it, anytime, 24/7!

### **IJCTRT Editorial Board Members:**

**Editor: Thomas S. Parish**, Ph.D., CTCTC, please see listing printed above.

### **Other Members of the Board:**

**Janet M. Fain Morgan**, Ed.D., is currently a Director of the William Glasser International Board and the Research Coordinator for William Glasser International. She is also a faculty member of the WGI lectures on Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. In addition, Dr. Morgan has an extensive background in counseling and teaching with specialty areas in Military Issues, Grief and Loss, Marriage Counseling, and Domestic Violence Predator Treatment.

**Emerson Capps**, Ed.D., Professor Emeritus at Midwest State University, plus serves as a Faculty Member of WGI-US.

**Joycelyn G. Parish**, Ph.D., CTCTC, is a licensed clinical psychotherapist. She earned her Ph.D. from Kansas State University and is a board-certified clinician and certified reality therapist.

**Patricia Robey**, Ed.D., Full professor at Governor's State University, Licensed Professional Counselor, and Senior Faculty Member of WGI-US and William Glasser International.

**Brandi Roth**, Ph.D., Licensed Private Practice Professional Psychologist in Beverly Hills, CA.

**Jean Seville Suffield**, Ph.D., Senior Faculty, William Glasser International, as well as President and Owner of Choice-Makers@ located in Longueuil, Quebec, CANADA.

**Robert E. Wubbolding**, Ed.D., Professor Emeritus at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and is the Director of the Center for Reality Therapy also in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Jeri Ellis**, Ed.D., Licensed professional counselor in Atlanta, GA, and has also served for many years on the Research Committee for William Glasser International.

### **IJCTRT Technical Advisor:**

**Denise Daub**, Web Administrator and Finance Manager for William Glasser International.

# "CT/RT BRIEF BIOS" NEEDED!

## HAVE YOU SUBMITTED YOUR "BRIEF BIO " for INCLUSION in the SPRING 2024 ISSUE of the *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL of CHOICE THEORY and REALITY THERAPY?*

On April 15, 2024, our FINAL summary of all our "CT/RT Brief Bios" will be published in the Spring issue of the *International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*. Many members and friends of the Glasser Institute for Choice Theory (GIFCT) have already provided their CT/RT Brief Bios, which have previously appeared in either the Fall 2020 or the Spring 2021 issues of the *International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*. Those inclusions will be once again included in the 2024 issue of the Journal unless you submit a more current copy in the interim (i.e., between now and then) that updates your professional activities for all to appreciate. However, many more members and friends of GIFCT have not done so yet! If you're among those that have submitted your CT/RT Brief Bio before, please (1) update your CT/RT Brief Bio for us (if you wish), or (2) if you haven't yet, you should do so if you wish to be included in this timely record of GIFCT. Please note that everyone should be included for everyone's sake. Please allow me to explain why this is so.

First, there is no charge to you, or to anyone else, for providing you this service. In other words, it's FREE!

Second, this is a great way to keep track of people, to see what they've done, what they're doing, and possibly find out what they're planning to do!

Third, this should be a great source of information regarding how we could communicate with each other, with updates appearing annually thereafter at the William Glasser International website (i.e., [www.wglasserinternational.org/updates](http://www.wglasserinternational.org/updates)).

Fourth, our CT/RT Brief Bios should also be helpful to those who wish to collaborate with you on various projects or seek to retain your services for doing in-services, presentations, and/or other similar professional activities. Importantly, your professional summary listed within your CT/RT Brief Bio should serve you nicely to familiarize everyone with what you've done, what you're doing, and/or what you plan to be doing for many years to come. Furthermore, your CT/RT Brief Bio will be circulated to all of our members and friends around the world, and will be available on our website, too, at no cost to you!

Fifth, once you've done this most everyone will likely be able to "look up" who you are and what you've done, but if you don't submit your CT/RT Brief Bio for inclusion in the upcoming Spring, 2024 issue of the Journal you'll likely not be remembered for all that you did as a William Glasser "contributor" and/or "collaborator."

Sixth, while there are many members and friends still with us, some are not! That being the case, we need to also remember those who have passed on and how they would like to be remembered. Those of us who have known him/her, and revered him/her, should write up a brief note for him/her, too, acknowledging the wonderful things that s/he did for all of us. In the Fall 2020 issue of the IJCTRT I included such a note for Dr. Lawrence Litwack, who was a dear friend as well as the editor of the *Journal of Reality Therapy* (1981-1996) and the *International Journal of Reality Therapy* (1996-2009). My tribute to Larry appears on page 119 of that issue of the *Journal*. Now, if you are so inclined, you might follow suit and write a tribute of your own, for someone who did himself/herself proud as a member of GIFCT, but has passed on, and submit your tribute to me ([parishts@gmail.com](mailto:parishts@gmail.com)) at your

earliest convenience, but no later than **December 31, 2023**. Allow me to assure you that you'll be glad you did!

Directions regarding how to prepare your CT/RT Brief Bio can be found in this issue of the Journal (please see below). So please send your "CT/RT Brief Bio" to me at your earliest convenience, but not later than **December 31, 2023**. If you don't, just imagine your loss by not sharing with your fellow members and friends of GIFCT any updates that you have about your accomplishments, past, present, and/or future, plus ways that others can get ahold of you too. Truly, in the words of Dr. Gary Applegate, "Invisible is miserable," so please send your "CT/RT Brief Bio" to me at [parishts@gmail.com](mailto:parishts@gmail.com) so that we can all "reconnect" with one another in celebration of our fond memories of each other. Yes, Bob Hope probably said it best as he ended many of his shows by simply saying "Thanks for the memories!"

### **Directions for Submitting Your "CT/RT Brief Bio" for Inclusion in the Spring 2024 Issue of the International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy.**

The only requirement is that each "CT/RT Brief Bio" should be no longer than two (2) pages in length, prepared in Verdana, ten-point type, and be sure to include Name, Address, e-mail Address, and *Phone Number (optional)* at the outset of page 1.

If you wish to include special skill sets and/or experiences that you've had or possess that would be especially helpful in dealing with specific populations, such information may be included on a third page.

Otherwise, the best counsel that I can provide the potential submitter is that s/he should review copies of available "CT/RT Brief Bios" and decide what might work best for him/her and what s/he is seeking to do! These copies are readily available in Volume 40 (#1) and 40 (#2) of the *International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*, which are located at the following website:

[www.wglasserinternational.org/journals](http://www.wglasserinternational.org/journals)



# **The World Really Needs Your “Brief Bio”!**

**In many ways your “brief bio” is much like a seed,  
which, if properly used, could help us all to succeed!  
Yes, the seed needs to be planted and allowed to grow,  
while your “brief bio” needs to be shared, this much we all know!**

**If this doesn’t happen, then our lives will not likely be improved,  
and crucial opportunities could be lost if they’re not properly used.  
So kindly plant your seeds and submit your “brief bios,” too,  
because if you don’t all of us will very likely lose!**

**Notably, since this opportunity may never come again,  
we’ll likely wonder what message our actions will send.  
But if you do so many benefits will likely accrue,  
besides, it simply is the “right thing” for you to do!**

**So, please make your move, and just do what you need to do,  
so that people everywhere will come to learn more about you!  
By doing so, you’ll likely benefit many who need you right now,  
but that won’t happen until you tell them about yourself somehow!**

**Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC**  
Editor, The International Journal of  
Choice Theory and Reality Therapy

**P.S., Now is likely the last chance for your “Brief Bio” to be included here,  
so that you might be esteemed like many others that we also hold dear!  
So, kindly do not delay any more, just submit your “Brief Bio” really soon,  
since having it among so many greats will be truly seen as a real boon!  
THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES!**

## We started here . . .

### October 2020, "Who's Who in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy"

Included here is **Volume 1**, which includes a list of alphabetically-arranged CT/RT folks from 2020. If your "CT/RT Brief Bios" aren't found here, then you need to e-mail your [NEW "Brief Bios"](#) to me at the following address, no later than December 31, 2023 . . . [parishts@gmail.com](mailto:parishts@gmail.com) Please place [NEW "BRIEF BIOS"](#) in the Memo Box. The only requirement is that each "Brief Bio" should be no longer than two pages in length. Let's call the next issue of our **"CT/RT Who's Who, Volume 2,"** and after that we're through!

As for **Volume 1**, included here are the following individuals' "Brief Bios," which are intended to provide evidence of what we've already done, plus what we're able to do, and/or what we plan to do to help others out during these turbulent times. Notably, some of the "Brief Bios" listed here even describe special skill sets and skills that individuals possess that might be especially helpful to many individuals and/or organizations that might be in need right now!

Please note that IF your "CT/RT Brief Bio" does appear here, but you wish to up-date or revise it, just do so and note [REVISED "BRIEF BIO"](#) in the Memo Box so that it might be easily identified and placed correctly in the 2024 Set of Brief Bios! **WE END HERE...**

**Check only one: NEW "BRIEF BIO" \_\_\_\_ REVISED "BRIEF BIO" \_\_\_\_ NO CHANGE \_\_\_\_**

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## **GROWING AND DEVELOPING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH: AN INTRODUCTION**

Nancy Buck

### **Let's talk about health.**

Do you know what to do to get into better physical health? I'm not asking you if you want to get into better physical health. I'm simply asking if you know what you need to do to achieve that goal? I'm guessing your answer would include things like: (1) eat more fruit and vegetables, (2) eat less sugar and (3) drink less alcohol. In addition, (4) some kind of regular exercise would also be on your list as well as (5) being sure to regularly get a good night's sleep. More up to date answers might also include (6) regular meditation and (7) a stress reduction regime.

Now let's consider daily habits to improve your dental health. If you want to maintain or improve your oral health what would you do? (1) Brushing and (2) flossing your teeth once or twice a day at a minimum should be on your list. So are (3) bi-annual visits to your dentist that include X-rays at least once a year. Then, when you learn you have a cavity, or some other problem, you (4) follow the care recommendations of your dentist, yes?

Okay, now what do you need to do to improve, develop and/or maintain good mental health? Do you have any idea? Do you even have a guess? Do you know what mental health actually is?

Isn't that amazing? You, like me, probably learned early in your life what our good physical and oral health was. If you're of a certain age, you may have had a health class that was also part of your physical education curriculum. Currently, I know of a few elementary and middle school teachers who ask their students to go brush their teeth after lunch, supporting and promoting the idea of good dental health.

For decades I worked as a psychiatric nurse in both general hospitals, and psychiatric hospitals, as well as public and private behavioral health clinics. None of the professionals I worked with, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other nurses ever discussed or mentioned how to develop and grow good mental health.

In the five decades I worked in this field the only significant change in the field was changing the name from psychiatric illness to mental illness, to mental and behavioral health. Today when people talk about mental health, no one is talking about HEALTH. Usually, they are usually referring to the symptoms of disease; feelings of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, as well as behavioral dysregulation and/or trauma.

So, is mental health simply the absence of any of these? Who knows? It's never really been defined or talked about.

There was a dramatic paradigm shift that occurred for physical and dental health. With the shift, these areas of health were defined as more than the absence of symptoms and diseases. They were defined as fit and health conditions that could be achieved through personal habits and responsible choices.

Isn't it time that we did the same with mental health too!

I was fortunate enough to study and learn Choice Theory psychology from my mentor Dr. William Glasser. I am now one of the world's leading experts in Choice Theory. I, along with

my Choice Theory colleagues, are on a mission. We want to teach **GROWING AND DEVELOPING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH** to the world. We want all people to know what to do to practice daily habits, developing, improving and maintaining their good mental health, just as they do their physical and dental health.

So, welcome to **GROWING AND DEVELOPING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH**. To begin with, I will not only share our working definition of good mental health, but I will help you learn Choice Theory psychology. In essence, you will start learning why you do the things you do. You will begin by making better choices, plus improve the quality of the important relationships in your life. As a result of this process, you will ultimately improve the quality of your life.

Please don't hesitate to share your comments and questions, plus take good notes, too, so that you could share what you'll learn, with many more than just a few!

Warmly,  
Dr. Nancy Buck

## **"PAYING IT FORWARD," USING CT/RT STRATEGIES**

Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., Editor, IJCTRT

### **Abstract**

**First off, what often impedes us from devising many new learning strategies that, in turn, we could readily pass on to help many others? Well, according to Dr. William Glasser (1980), people generally don't learn what they don't want to learn, but counseling (or teaching) could become more effective IF people who "hurt" (or had an abiding interest) personally discovered that they could readily develop better ways to learn about various things! This simple idea is the single foundation block for William Glasser's (1998) model which he entitled "Choice Theory." Basically, life is believed to be the search for "positive alternatives," which we may stumble over and/or step up on as we endeavor to handle the problems that we run in to throughout our lives.**

### **Let's call this "The Road to Greater Positivism!"**

**The road to greater positivism can be a difficult route, indeed,  
for many will want to make it more difficult than they need.**

**Placing countless hurdles in everybody's way,  
seems to be quite unneeded, what more can I possibly say?**

**The truth, however, is that there is a much better way,  
that will likely only begin once you decide to humbly pray!  
You must know where you're at and where you wish to go,  
and then develop workable plans that won't go too slow!**

**Yes, going at a reasonable pace is okay with me,  
but stopping/hesitating along the way can create lots of leathery!  
So, as you go from wherever you are to wherever you wish to be,  
just don't take forever and a day, or for all eternity!**

**Above all else, please keep your various goals firmly in mind,  
for if you do, all will likely turn out just fine.  
In addition, you may wish to "pay it forward" for others, too,  
which should be a great help to others, but especially for you!**

**T. S. Parish, 2023**

To begin with, we may be initially limited in various ways,  
since things aren't always black or white, but mostly just shades of grey.  
To simplify this matter, then, the model proposed in TABLE #1,  
should help us all understand what we need to know and what we can get done.

**TABLE #1**  
**Resolving Conflicts in Life\***

Row	Condition	Aware of Problem?	Aware of Solution?	Does what's Needed?	Outcome
<b>1</b>	<b>Ignorance</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Bliss? Maybe!</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>True Conflict</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Frustration</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>False Conflict</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>GUILTY</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Resolved Conflict</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>HAPPY</b>

Regarding Rows 1 and 2, the person-in-question is generally faced with a “primary” or “unavoidable” problem that s/he simply can’t resolve.

Regarding Rows 3 and 4, the person-in-question knows how to resolve the “secondary” or “resolvable” problem, but in Row 3 s/he chooses not to do it, while the person in Row 4 also knows how to solve the problem but implements strategies s/he knows/believes will stop the problem in its tracks! Good Job!

For those who wish to find happiness, s/he must traverse Rows 1 through 4 before s/he will achieve the goal(s) that s/he seeks, otherwise, for those caught in Rows 1 and 2, they CAN’T, while those in ROW 3, s/he won’t!

There are many possible reasons why people find themselves in these different rows. For instance, they might not have the “efficient behaviors” in their playbooks that could readily resolve such problems, and therefore they resorted to “inefficient behaviors” instead.

These are actions that may, indeed, satisfy some basic need(s) (e.g., love, power, fun, freedom, survival), but then the same behavior may also create new need(s) too. Why did they use “inefficient behaviors” that they had drawn from their behavioral repertoire? Well, it may have seemed to be a good idea at the time, or they simply didn’t know what else they could possibly do. (A lot of people simply utter, “Oops!” here, and then try to quickly move on down the road often without ever looking back!)

Regarding individuals in Row 4, however, their behavioral repertoire includes “efficient behaviors” within it, allowing these individuals to knowingly do things that satisfy some existing need(s) without creating new needs too! Hence, they are more likely to experience the happiness they seek much more so than those who don’t have such efficient choices in their playbooks to select from.

**\*From: Parish, T. S. (1990). Resolving conflicts in life. *Journal of Reality Therapy*, 10 (1), 71-72.**

To see how this might be so, Dr. Gary Applegate (1980) developed a model entitled "Building Psychological Strengths." It is presented in TABLE #2:

**TABLE #2**  
**Building Psychological Strengths\***

<u>INEFFICIENT BEHAVIORS</u>	<u>NEEDS</u>	<u>EFFICIENT BEHAVIORS</u>
Angering	WORTH/RECOGNITION	Make a <b>PLAN</b> to succeed
Depressing	LOVE/BELONGING	Approach others first
Choose to be boring	FUN	Be a fun-maker
Be rigid & irresponsible	FREEDOM	Be responsible & flexible
Stagnating	KNOWLEDGE	Be curious/spontaneous
Control or be controlled	SECURITY	Develop skills
Look for the negative	FAITH	Look for the positive
Neglect health	HEALTH	Be in balance

To expand upon the model presented in TABLE #2, Parish (in press) developed a model (see TABLE #3) describing many different behaviors, what needs were likely satisfied by them, or not, and how each was subsequently categorized (i.e., were they efficient or inefficient behaviors).

**TABLE #3**  
**Consequences of Our Behaviors**

Behaviors	Needs Satisfied	Needs Created	End Results
Depressing	Freedom	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	<u>Ineff.</u> acts/feelings
Emoting	Freedom, WR	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Angering	Freedom, WR	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Complaining	Freedom, WR	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Criticizing	Freedom, WR	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Crazying	Freedom, ????	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Abusing	Freedom, W&R	L&B, W&R, F&F, Surv.	Ineff. acts/feelings
Caring	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Sharing	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Encouraging	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Empathizing	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Loving	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Complimenting	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings
Calming	LB, WR, Fu, Fr, S.	????????????????	Effic. acts/feelings

\*Applegate, G. (1980). Building psychological strengths. From intensive week class that was offered in Wichita, KS.

### **Key to abbreviations:**

WR = Worth & Recognition Needs

LB = Love & Belonging Needs

Fr = Freedom Needs

Fu = Fun Needs

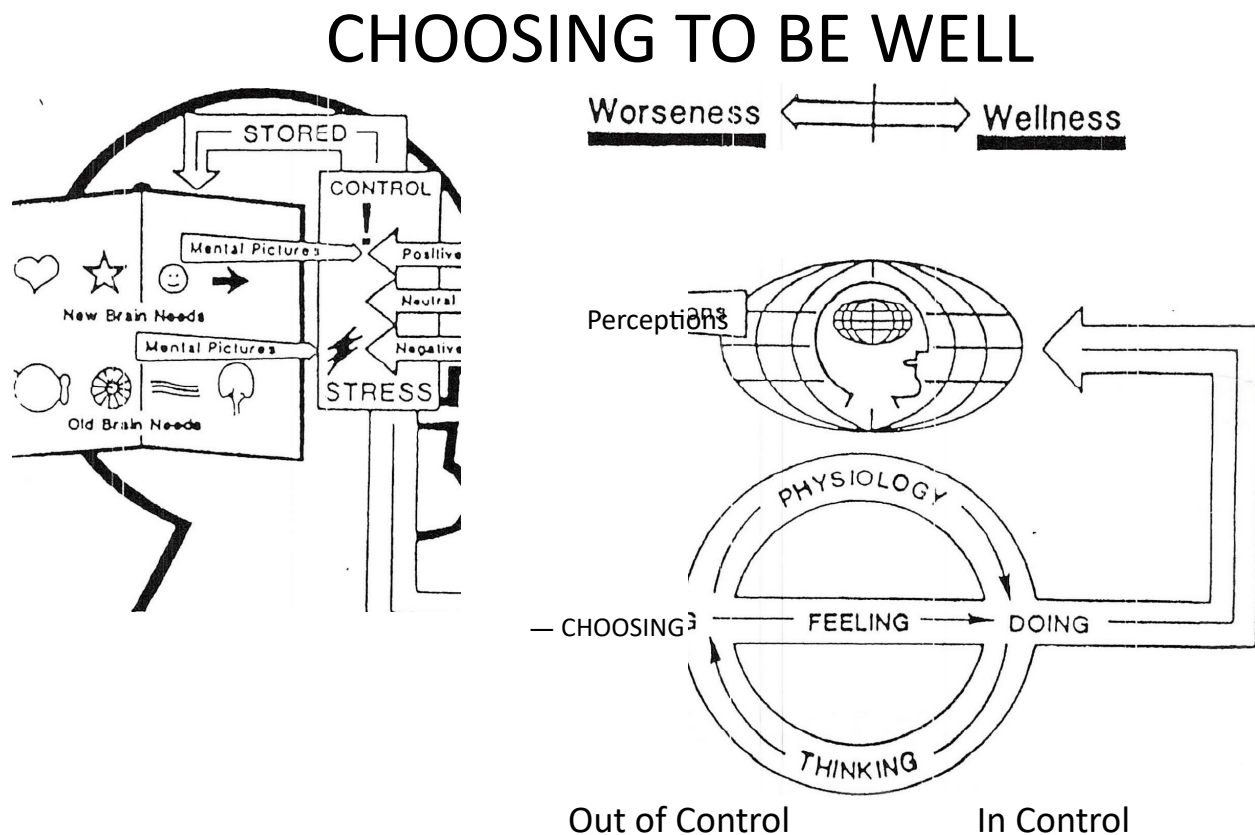
Surv. or S = Survival Needs

Ineff. acts/feelings = Inefficient acts/feelings

Effic. acts/feelings = Efficient acts/feelings

A composite model regarding what is actually going on within our minds as well as within our external worlds was developed by Frank J. Gilbert and Ronald E. Hunninghake. It is entitled "Choosing to be Well," and it is presented below in TABLE #4:

**TABLE #4**  
**CHOOSING to be WELL**



Created by: Frank J. Gilbert & Ronald Hunninghake (913) 825-8221  
WELLPLAN, 617 E. Elm Street, P.O. Box 1707, Salina, KS 67402-1707



What this model seeks to portray is how people maintain an array of perceived pictures in their own "picture books," and another array of "plays," which is a composite of all the plays ever employed by that particular person in-question, and also stored in that person's own "playbook." Notably, a third book is also likely to be maintained, but this book's contents are of "spoken and/or written words" that also hold substantial meaning for that particular person in-question.

Most importantly, all three of these books consist of items that maintain either a positive or a negative valence, inferring their level of attractiveness vs. repulsiveness for that person in-question.

Besides these three (3) books that we maintain in each of our minds, we also have an operational "comparing station," which is portrayed by one's mind's eye.

If the perception being taken in by the mind's eye is a welcomed sight it will be deemed to be a "controlled perception," but if it is not a welcomed sight, it would likely be deemed as an "uncontrolled perception" or "perceptual error."

If "positive feelings" prevail, the person in-question will most likely feel good and relaxed, and not wish to renounce his/her input, but will willingly accept it instead.

If an "uncontrolled perception" is encountered, then tension from feelings of rejection will prevail, causing copious amounts of stress which will likely be associated with it.

If the "positive feelings" prevail, however, then happiness will more likely tag along and "battle stations" will not likely be sounded. If, however, an "uncontrolled perception" occurs instead, alarms may be sounded, and evasive actions will likely be pursued in response to the alarm initiated by it!

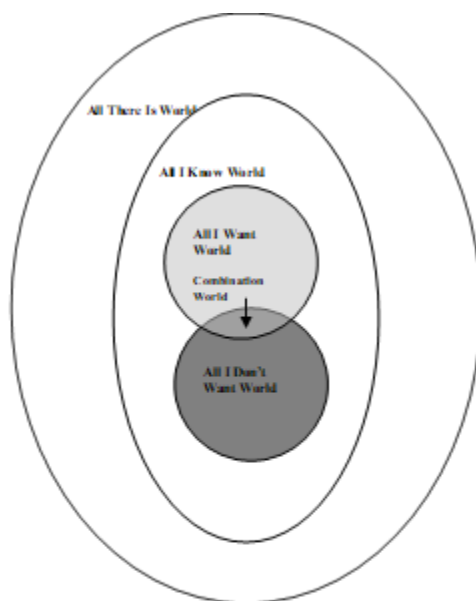
What the person in-question seeks to do is likely decided as the input is considered more deeply in the person's "decision wheel," where s/he chooses to do whatever is thought to be the best thing to do.

Notably, though, different people will choose differently without any apparent reason, as in the case of the movie entitled "The Witness." In this movie a young tuff crushed an ice cream cone into the forehead of an Amish young man, and the Amish young man never flinched. When Harrison Ford (who is the "star" in the film) witnessed this scene, however, he immediately jumped up to punch the ruffian. An older Amish man (seated beside Harrison Ford) countered immediately by saying that "We Amish don't do that (i.e., we never choose to fight). In response, Ford simply replied that he wasn't Amish, and therefore would not likely be constrained by any such Amish beliefs. Unfortunately, however, such behavior clearly showed Ford's enemies where Ford was hiding from them, which was therefore very inefficient for Ford's sake, at least in the near future!

Another way to look at what happens to us as we seek to interact with others, is to consider that each of us seems to live in "five worlds." Simply put, if your five worlds line up well with another's five worlds, you're likely going to be highly compatible with each other, but the bigger the differences that exist between you and him/her, the greater the likelihood that you'll perceive each other as being "worlds' apart" from each other.

Let's examine how this could possibly be so. In TABLE #5, there appears only a single model of the "Five Worlds." In real life, however, you may live with several people in your family, your fraternity, your sorority, your dorm, your barracks, so you might imagine dealing with everyone you interact with and all of their different worlds (and all of their pictures) too. That is basically what we all need to do from birth 'til death, and that could be a difficult chore, but that's what we're all really expected to be talking about or doing with each other, at least until we reach our end, whenever that might be.

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**Please insert TABLE #5 about here.**  
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Our Five "Worlds"  
Our Five "Worlds"

Notably, Dr. William Glasser's initially formulated model was based upon the first three worlds, which were as follows:

**World #1**—The “**All-I-Want World**” or the “**Quality World**.” Its name is quite self-explanatory, but it's also very descriptive of what each of us wishes from life.

**World #2**—The “**All-I-Know World**”. Well, actually it's what we know and what we also think we know, which can be a little tricky. As you peruse TABLE 6 (from Parish & Parish, 2015), you'll immediately notice how we can very easily become confused by such things as sources of “misinformation and/or disinformation.” Misinformation being information passed on to us by others who, unknowingly were sharing with us falsehoods, but neither they nor we were aware of that fact.

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**Please insert TABLE #6 about here**  
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Regarding Disinformation, these, too, are falsehoods by people who intentionally wish to lie to us, or misguide us, for whatever reason. This being so, such information is usually worth less than useless.

Our line of information can be easily disrupted by both inclusions of Misinformation and Disinformation but knowing that someone has sought to disrupt these lines of communication “intentionally” is particularly damning, for a myriad of reasons!

**World #3—The “All-There-Is World”.** Once again, its name is quite self-explanatory. Next, there isn't anyone who knows everything, though some might tell you that they do! Be careful, though, for most likely s/he might either be your enemy or a fool!

The two worlds that were added by “yours truly” in 1992, came about when I found that some people could not articulate what they wanted, but could readily come up with a list of things that they really wished to avoid, if at all possible! This world, or **World #4**, is referred to as the “**All-I-Don't-Want World**” and can become an incredible problem when someone places a particular item in this world, while his/her partner prioritizes said message or item very differently. In this instance, this couple truly is living “worlds apart” from each other and should definitely seek to amend this situation before it's too late.

**World #5, or the “Combination” World**, is the world that contains both things that people want and don't want within it. Doughnuts, for instance, could easily be placed here since they'll taste good for a few seconds but then plague your waistline for the next ten years. Therefore, you'll want to bolster your self-discipline or live with the increase in your expanding waistline for the foreseeable future. No matter what, however, it'll always be **“your choice”!**

**TABLE#6**

**The All-I-Know World is composed of “all we know....”**

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What Exists in Your All-I-Know World?</li><li>• “All-I-Perceive”</li><li>• “All-I-Believe”</li><li>• “All-I-Think”</li><li>• “All-I-Understand”</li><li>• Picture Books</li><li>• Play Books</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Mis-information</i></li><li>• <i>Dis-information</i></li><li>• <i>Assumptions</i></li><li>• <i>Bias</i></li><li>• <i>Errors</i></li><li>• <i>Missing information</i></li><li>• <i>Mis-interpretations</i></li><li>• <i>Mis-understandings</i></li><li>• <i>Questions</i></li><li>• <i>Answers</i></li><li>• <i>And....</i></li></ul> |
|--|---|



**What makes the “Five Worlds” most difficult to live with is that you’ll be able to do well with some people, but not with others. Let’s see why this might be so...**

**80% Rule A**

**According to this rule, you’ll be able to influence people 80% of the time, if you like those people or if they are like you, but . . .**

**80% Rule B**

**This rule says you’ll not be able to influence people 80% of the time if you don’t like them or if they are not like you!**

**100% Rule**

**However, according to the 100% Rule, you should be able to communicate effectively 100% of the time with others if you are willing to help them to get what they want/need, and in turn, you’ll more likely get what you want, too, since s/he will very likely be more willing to help you too!**

**The Golden Rule**

**This rule simply says that you should always do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

**The Platinum Rule**

**This rule simply states that you should do unto others as they would want done unto them. Following this rule will be essential and will likely continue eternally if it is followed correctly!**

As a general rule, most people say that these are all good rules to live by!  
Nevertheless, it's always your choice as to what you actually do, according to  
Choice Theory!

Next, Og Mandino (1968), came up with TEN HABITS that are intended to help  
foster greater happiness within all of us, as well as help us to smile more and be  
more positive and up-beat too. In order to achieve these ends, here's what  
Mandino (1968) recommends that we all need to do:

1. You should greet each day with love in your heart for in so doing  
you'll more likely succeed!
2. You must persist until you succeed!
3. Keep telling yourself that you're God's greatest miracle!
4. Be sure to live each day as though it is your last!
5. Today you will master your emotions!
6. Today you will laugh at the world!
7. Today you'll multiply your value a hundredfold!
8. Wishes are an opiate! Instead, we need to set our goals and  
then do what's needed to realize them! Just DO IT, DO IT RIGHT,  
and DO IT RIGHT NOW!
9. Demonstrate to all concerned enthusiasm for what you're doing!
10. You must have faith . . . in yourself, and in your Creator!

Notably, happiness is very important to everyone, even you and me,  
but there are other things that we also need to do in order to succeed.  
Finding employment is likely key, so here are some hints that should help nearly  
everybody:

Table 7 – Parish, T. S., & Rothmeyer, R. (2021). **The Job Interviewees' Alphabet.**  
*The International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*, 40 (2), 32-34.

Table #8 – Parish, T. S., & Burdenski (2011). **Checklist for Successful Interviews.**  
*The International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*, 31 (1), 44-47.

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Please insert TABLES 7 & 8 about here.  
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## **TABLE #7**

### **The Job Interviewees' Alphabet (Or the Things We Should All Do Initially to Get a Job!)**

**Thomas S. Parish and Renae Rothmeyer**

**Getting a job is often a difficult thing to do, but if you follow these few simple tips  
any job can be yours as a general rule!**

- A** \_\_\_\_\_ Arrive early, and don't be a "Johnny-come-lately."
- B** \_\_\_\_\_ Bring a smile to share for a while.
- C** \_\_\_\_\_ Connect with your interviewer and others, too, if you think the job is right for you!
- D** \_\_\_\_\_ Dress for success, and never allow yourself to get upset!
- E** \_\_\_\_\_ Eye contact must be stressed if you really want to do your best!
- F** \_\_\_\_\_ Friendly and not fidgety you should be if you want others to treat you like family.
- G** \_\_\_\_\_ Go alone, and never with others, even if they are your favorite sisters or brothers.
- H** \_\_\_\_\_ Hone in on what the interviewer wants best, if you wish to do better than the rest.
- I** \_\_\_\_\_ Interview for jobs when you already have one, otherwise your efforts won't be fun!
- J** \_\_\_\_\_ Just be comfortable with yourself and be proud, too, for they're no better than you.
- K** \_\_\_\_\_ Know your stuff and do your best, while never settling for anything less.
- L** \_\_\_\_\_ Leave a lasting positive impression, with them wondering if you came from heaven.
- M** \_\_\_\_\_ Motivate yourself and others, too, for anything less will never do.
- N** \_\_\_\_\_ Never criticize anyone, for if you do, your job is lost, and you may be too.
- O** \_\_\_\_\_ Offer less and listen more, if you want the job, and not the door!
- P** \_\_\_\_\_ Possess enthusiasm for the job, and don't act like just another slob.
- Q** \_\_\_\_\_ Questions should be held until the end and asked as though you're a real friend!
- R** \_\_\_\_\_ Read over your "thank you" notes time and again, to be sure that you didn't offend!
- S** \_\_\_\_\_ Sense others' needs and attend to them and be sure that you do so again and again!
- T** \_\_\_\_\_ Take care that you don't jump too fast, for their first offer likely won't be their last!
- U** \_\_\_\_\_ Utilize interviews to practice for those to come, so you'll be ready for the next one!
- V** \_\_\_\_\_ Validity is an invaluable key, so be sure that everything you say is said honestly.
- W** \_\_\_\_\_ Wait and let silence be your friend, for in so doing, you'll get the job in the end.
- X** \_\_\_\_\_ eXcellence is always best, for anything less may limit your interviewing success.
- Y** \_\_\_\_\_ Your goals/plans will tell others where you stand, so never write them in the sand.
- Z** \_\_\_\_\_ eZ your interview may not be, but if it goes well, you'll likely leave it feeling happy!

**Notably, you should look over this "interview Alphabet" before each interview,  
and then be sure to do it again afterward too! This is so you can answer the question:  
"How well did you do?" With practice, you'll likely notice marked improvement, followed by  
more offers of employment for you.**

**Best wishes,**

**Tom & Renae**



## **TABLE #8**

### **Checklist for Successful Interviews** (Some very helpful hints regarding how to find employment) **Thomas S. Parish and Thomas Burdenski**

**Kindly answer the following questions with a "Yes" or a "No."**  
**Please strive to be very honest as you answer each and every question\*^**

- 1. \_\_\_ Did you look right? (Were you neat, and did you dress to impress the interviewer?)**
- 2. \_\_\_ Did you go alone to the interview?**
- 3. \_\_\_ If an appointment was set, were you early for the interview?**
- 4. \_\_\_ Were you prepared for the interview**
- 5. \_\_\_ When meeting others, did you shake hands firmly?**
- 6. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you look the interviewer in the eye?**
- 7. \_\_\_ During the interview, were you enthusiastic?**
- 8. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you act confidently, but not arrogant or conceited?**
- 9. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you act sincere?**
- 10. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you ask questions that showed an interest in the position?**
- 11. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you answer questions clearly and concisely?**
- 12. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you use proper grammar?**
- 13. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you demonstrate awareness of the company and its prod.?**
- 14. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you specify your personal goals, particularly as they pertained to the company?**
- 15. \_\_\_ During the interview, were you positive in your demeanor, and smile at others?**
- 16. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you speak well of your previous school experiences, past positions, and/or past employers?**
- 17. \_\_\_ During the interview, were you friendly to others (particularly with the interviewer)?**
- 18. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you convey to the interviewer that you are a very reliable and dependable person (did you mention that you were rarely ill, etc.)?**
- 19. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you avoid promising things that you can not do, i.e., did you note any restrictions/limitations that needed to be understood in advance.**
- 20. \_\_\_ During the interview, did you leave the impression that you really wanted the job, but only if you really did? If you don't, though, be sure to graciously decline.**
- 21. \_\_\_ After the interview, did you immediately send the interviewer(s) a thank-you note that indicated your continued interest in working with him, her, or them and the company too?**

**\*Notably, the more "Yeses" indicated above, the more likely the position in question will be offered to you!**

**^For best results, kindly look over this checklist before going to an interview, and then complete it afterwards too! Question: What have you gained for doing so?**  
**Answer: Hopefully, substantial insights regarding how to interview better next time!**

***International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy, Fall 2011, Vol. 31, no. 1, p. 46.***

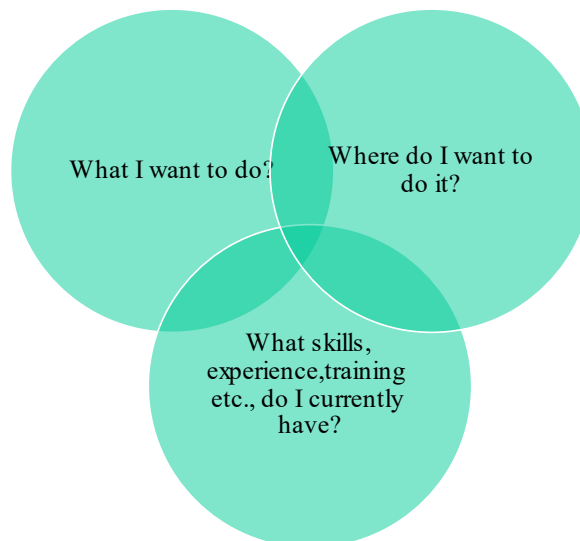
Of course, finding a job may require more than completing a checklist or two! In fact, according to Joycelyn Parish (In press), there are at least three (3) other things that can usually impact how well you do in your search for the “perfect job” for you. More specifically, as you endeavor to find this job be sure to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Where is this job available now?
2. What skills do I currently have to do this job?
3. Do I want this job?

Next, as shown in FIGURE #1, only go after the jobs that overlap all three of these criteria simultaneously, for those are the jobs with which you will most likely be satisfied. Notably, if you go after all of the other jobs, too, you’ll likely become unnecessarily frustrated since you’ll seem to be chasing your tail but find that you’ll never be able to catch it!

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Please insert FIGURE #1 about here.  
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## Career Exploration



**Remember, though, that on the job, or off on a tangent, everybody truly loves it when they readily "CONNECT" with others! This being so, what must we do to facilitate our "connecting" with one another?**

- 1. Listen when s/he is speaking!**
- 2. Show an interest in things that s/he is doing!**
- 3. Catch them being good!**
- 4. Congratulate him/her for an achievement!**
- 5. Always greet him/her with a smile!**
- 6. Be sure to express appreciation for his or her efforts!**
- 7. Always laugh with him/her, but never laugh at him/her!**
- 8. Strive to give him/her a reputation to live up to.**
- 9. Do a kindness for him/her in secret.**
- 10. Always speak positively in his/her presence!**
- 11. Never say anything bad about anyone to anyone else.**
- 12. Speak positively about things s/he likes!**
- 13. Be patient!**
- 14. Be optimistic!**
- 15. Maintain a Positive Mental Attitude**
- 16. Always smile/ Never frown/ and never let anyone get you down!**
- 17. Be sincere in every situation!**
- 18. Be sure to be the wind beneath his/her wings!**
- 19. Urge him/her to become the person that s/he truly wants to be!**
- 20. Assure him/her that life is as great as s/he makes it!**
- 21. Remember that kindness, and not coercion, brings us great joy!**
- 22. Are you helping him/her become the person s/he always wanted to be?**
- 23. Remind people who they are and how they want to be remembered!**
- 24. While wishing won't work, work will!**
- 25. Go ahead . . . and make your day!**

**Notably, the first author of this article has served as the Director of Personnel of a large manufacturing plant, and having served in that position, I certainly gained significant insights that I have sought to share with you as you strive to find meaningful employment. There are, however, two additional points that you need to ponder as you pursue your next position of employment.**

**First, do you foresee this position as fulfilling your needs well, or is it a stopgap measure that is intended to keep food on the table and a roof over your head? Hopefully, the former case applies here, and not the latter. Here's why? If your intent is to find meaningful employment and a lifetime of discovering insights that reward you with many "happy times," you will definitely have won!**

**However, if your intent is to amass a number of jobs (over time) but rarely, if ever, feel true joy, you could/should do better! Here's why: Your list of "experiences" is simply what you've done, but likely as not has not helped you to feel truly happy and/or really fulfilled. In other words, your "experiences" are**

**simply what you have gotten, but you may never have gotten to do what you truly wanted!**

**My advice: Go for the gusto! Do those things that bring you true joy! Never settle for anything less! If you will do so, that's truly great, since it's personally fulfilling and it should certainly help you to feel absolutely first-rate! Good job!!!**

**Second, as you interview, can you see yourself helping your supervisor(s) to experience similar experiences through what s/he does in the workplace? If so, that's even better! After all, at least two are maximally benefitting, and who knows how many more may also see the "Light," and may hopefully do all they can to live a better life!! Oh, by the way, this is what "Paying it forward" is really all about. Of this I am certain, in fact, of this I have absolutely NO DOUBT"!**

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**I can personally attest that people like this do, indeed, exist, and have made a huge difference in my life for which I will be eternally grateful. They are:**

**Dr. Michael C. Holen, Department Chair of Administration & Foundations, 1976-1980**

**" " " Dean, College of Education, Kansas State Univ. 1980-2005**

**Dr. Thomas R. Coleman, Salina, KS Stake President, 1986-1996**

**Bill Snyder, Head Coach, KSU Football Team, 1991-1996**

**William Glasser, M.D., Founder of Reality Therapy & Choice Theory, 1980-2013**

**Bob Wubbolding, Ed.D., Research guru for Reality Therapy & Choice Theory, 1980-pres.**

**Mr. George Pinder, Director of Salaried Personnel, Ampex Corp., Elk Grove, IL. 1968-1969.**

**Thank you, one and all, for all that you have done to guide and direct me throughout much of my entire life. I truly feel that each of you have shown me the way to go, and now I hope that Renae and I will step up and continue to do all we can to help others too!**

**Best wishes in all that you do, and may you help others to realize their dreams too!**

**Tom Parish & Renae Rothmeyer**

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## Brief Bio—

Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC, has been the Editor of *The International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy* since 2010 and is an emeritus professor at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. He has authored or co-authored hundreds of refereed professional journal articles, many of which have had Choice Theory and Reality Therapy as their primary focus. In addition, Tom and his wife (Dr. Joycelyn G. Parish) have served clients through Parish Mental Health and Life Coaching of Topeka (KS). He can be reached at parishts@gmail.com

# **WAYS TO USE CHOICE THEORY AND REALITY THERAPY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE HIGHLY EFFICIENT ENDS!**

Thomas S. Parish

## **Abstract**

What secrets do Choice Theory and Reality Therapy possess, and why do their processes work so well on so many people around the world today? This brief paper will seek to address these concerns that we all need to more fully understand IF we are to effectively teach the world Choice Theory and/or Reality Therapy.

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While most of these secrets are very simple to understand and to use, they aren't always so simple as Wubbolding (Fall 2023) suggests by merely asking people to select between going down "Awful Avenue" or "Happiness Highway." For instance, Glasser (Better-Choices.org) begins by urging people to routinely employ "Caring Habits" instead of "Deadly Habits." As spelled out by Parish (Fall 2023), the former habits tend to be highly efficient in getting people what they want (e.g., listens, supports, encourages, respects, trusts, accepts, and/or negotiates to an acceptable end) without also drawing unto themselves other things that they really do not want to be associated with (e.g., criticizes, blames, complains, nags, threatens, punishes, or rewards to bribe or control).

Notably, even the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians (in the New Testament), in chapter 5, verses 22-23 and beyond, said of those who were "loving," that they would experience great joy, peace, gentleness, endure longsuffering, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance too. Paul further elaborated that they had the "pure love of Christ" and also blessed others by their "Christlike actions."

In marked contrast to this, Paul wrote about another group of people who were often described as evil-doers and (according to Paul, in Galatians) associated with themselves the following terms instead: hatred, wrath, strife, seditious, envyings, drunkenness, reveling, jealousy, and more. Truly, as I read these two lists it's easy for me to see why it was that "wickedness was never happiness," particularly since the first group worked hard at becoming more Christlike, while the second group definitely didn't.

So how was it that the first group acted so differently from the second group? William Glasser (1988), in my estimation, would quickly conclude that they acted in accordance with their choices! Thus, the former group was more likely being blessed for their Christlike actions, while the latter group was more likely cursed for their unrighteous actions.

So how can we fix this? Well, during the 1980's I had the great pleasure of having two doctoral advisees (Named Stanley Wigle and Frank Gilbert) who were going through the Glasser certification process (along with yours truly) while they had their office in my outer office in Dickens Hall at Kansas State University. Notably, they practiced asking "Information-giving Questions" of one another for many hours a day! I was truly impressed as I listened since it was obvious to me that their intent was not to "tell" people what they were doing was wrong and how to correct it, but to ask information-giving questions that



would help others to discover the error of their ways on their own, and then to also figure out what they needed to do to quickly correct it. To say the least, Frank and Stan did great, and I learned much, too, by being involved in what they sought to do.

In actuality, when therapists employ "information-giving questions" they place the responsibility upon the client to decide whether to employ the idea at-hand, or try for another, if that is his/her plan. Thus, all the therapist needs to do is to ask the right questions and then allow the client to do what s/he needs to do.

Here are some "Information-giving questions" for you to consider:

"Did you ever enjoy going out on fun dates? Consider the book "Up-Date" by Dee Hadley (1988), which presented a list of approximately 700 activities that two people could check to determine if both would like to do that activity. For instance, one item read "Do you like to go looking for night-crawlers at night." Truly, if both parties checked that item, that could suggest that they might be quite compatible. Then, if they checked an additional hundred or two hundred items in common, it would seem a safer bet that that was indeed the case!

The point is, "Have you ever done things together that you've never done before?" "Were they fun for both of you?"

Before we move on, everyone needs to know that therapists usually ask questions, but then the clients decide which way to go! Why might this be so?

When therapists make statements regarding what clients should do, things often get rocky for both of you.

So, it might be better to stay with asking information-giving questions as best as you can, for in so doing your client will more likely remain your biggest fan!

### **Eight Elements of Reality Therapy**

According to William Glasser (1980), people won't learn what they don't want to learn, but teaching and/or counseling becomes more effective as soon as people who hurt (or have an interest in something) discover that they can learn a better way!

	<b><u>Creates cogn. diss. *</u></b>	<b><u>Avoids psych. reactance^</u></b>
<b>Make friends</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>ASK "What do you want?"</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>ASK: "What are you doing?"</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>ASK: "Is it working?"</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Invite to make a plan!</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Invite to commit to a plan?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Accept "NO" excuses</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Do NOT punish</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Never give up</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>

**Reality Therapy seeks to instill INTERNAL CONTROL, NOT EXTERNAL CONTROL!**

**Read button: You are my friend, I just don't know your name yet. What is being urged here?**

**\*Creates ownership**

**^Avoids external intrusion**

**Where do the notions come from regarding what we do?**

1. From experience, i.e., that's what we've done before.
2. From others. We learn vicariously. We saw it work for them, maybe for me?
3. Inside of you! Something new, never tried before, a "wild hair."

Which will we trust the most? Why?

#### **WAYS TO "CONNECT WITH OTHERS!"**

1. "Learning what's in a person's 'QUALITY WORLD' and then try to support it, will bring us closer to that person than anything else we can do" (Glasser, 1998, p. 51).
2. Encourage "Cognitive Dissonance" (i.e., Ownership). Can you tell me how?  
Ask: What do they want? Inquire about interests, determine their likes and dislikes!  
Just listen!
3. Avoid psychological reactance? Can you tell me how? Just listen, don't talk, don't intrude!
4. Don't be "worlds apart," overlap instead. The "Five Worlds" really come into play here!
5. Abide by the "PLATINUM RULE"! Do unto others as they want done unto them!
6. Provide MULTIPLE "Educational Moments" e.g., Heider's "Attribution Theory"!
7. Use "HIGHLIGHTING"!
8. How should these work in a classroom?
9. How should these work in a relationship?
10. HINT: Keep a journal, write poetry, publish and/or present! Why?

Answer: According to Gary Applegate (1980) "Invisible is miserable."

Let's now consider what life looks like through the eyes of teachers who feel like they've been lost in the shuffle and no longer see themselves as a positive factor in their own lives nor in their students' lives!

#### **Inefficient and Ineffective Behaviors by Teachers**

Teachers, by the way, often demonstrate how negative perceptions, or negative expectations, can rule the day, and likely torment them as they do so. For example . . .

These teachers feel that they're in deep trouble when they consider themselves to be members of a "Mission Impossible" team, but really can't imagine why they ever put themselves in this predicament in the first place.

These teachers discovered that they've contracted a terrible illness, since they have actually become "sick of school"!

These teachers have also discovered that they have become totally indifferent about wanting to make a difference!

These teachers have realized that erasers and liquid paper were created especially for them, since none of them believe they are perfect.

These teachers have generally concluded that their teaching is totally unfulfilling, and they believe that their students would generally agree.

These teachers have prepared to teach a lesson, but don't think anyone wants to learn it!

These teachers believe that their students really want to drive them crazy but are reasonably sure that none of them have a driver's license.

These teachers wonder if they could really "make a difference," with "indifferent students."

These teachers check to see if they're in the phone book because no one ever calls!

These teachers find that they're already tired of school, and it's only 8:00 a.m.!

Though these teachers have taught for many years, they wonder if their students have ever LEARNED anything!

**Next, while the above section describes how teachers may view themselves as their own worst enemies, there are other teachers whose pictures in their minds (i.e., their perceptions) convey very different messages. Basically, these teachers maintain very positive perceptions of teaching and how they manage to do it, while often wearing a smile on their face.**

### **Efficient and Effective Teachers**

To begin with, these teachers strongly believe that success comes in "cans," while failures come in can'ts!

These teachers avoid stumbling blocks of adversity but climb up steppingstones to success!

These teachers use past failures at guideposts to success.

These teachers realize that LIFE is only as good as they make it!

These teachers strive to achieve change and believe that they can make a difference.

These teachers believe that they possess competence and confidence, and gladly share these attributes with their students.

These teachers care enough to give their very best!

These teachers understand that IF they teach enthusiastically then their students will learn enthusiastically.

These teachers have discovered that wishing won't work but work will!

These teachers won't dwell on what students can do but focus on what they can do instead.

These teachers have learned that doing their best means they always need to do better!

These teachers have discovered that teaching is learning twice and that it's also the best way to learn!

These teachers have learned that excellence only occurs where excellence is appreciated.

These teachers have realized that ATTITUDE is the mind's paint brush since it can color any situation.

These teachers have found that KINDNESS, and not COERCION, will bring true joy!

These teachers have discovered that nobody rises to low expectations . . . not even them!

These teachers show their optimism by smiling through their tears!

These teachers have discovered that LIFE is a challenge only if they challenge themselves.

These teachers have determined that nobody ever hits the target by accident.

Finally, these teachers have learned that either they can, or they can!

Notably, I borrowed all of these ideas from ideas I compiled almost three decades ago

(Parish, Necessary & Spencer, 1996). Curiously, though, they still all apply today!

Of course, students do, indeed, exist, and do attend our nations' classrooms, along with our teachers, and really want to see times change so that they no longer experience so many grey days in exchange for our greatest days instead.

How might this be accomplished? Well, at least for teachers, the profile offered above describing efficient and effective teachers would be a great start, but according to Parish and Stallings (1991), a very effective teacher should generally possess the following characteristics:

1. Deeply interested in the subject matter to be taught.
2. Deeply interested in his/her students.
3. Likely to present class discussions rather than straight lectures.
4. Able to teach at his/her students' level(s).
5. Able to comfortably interact with his/her students.
6. Unlikely to threaten or punish.
7. Able to inject humor, variety, and/or drama, into his/her classes.
8. Likely to deal with students with kindness and courtesy.
9. Likely to ask students to do things that feel good.
10. Likely to seek input from the class regarding possible courses of action.

Another study, by Parish and Newman (June 2007), offered another profile for anyone possessing the "right stuff":

1. Heroic imagery
2. Positive auras
3. Highly determined
4. Establishes goals

5. Firm plans
6. Makes commitments
7. Good reputation
8. Highly confident
9. High self-esteem
10. Highly optimistic
11. Always ready to try
12. Good attitude

In contrast, Parish and Newman (June 2007) also offered a counter profile for the people thought to possess the “wrong stuff”.

1. Loser auras
2. Negative imagery
3. Lacks focus
4. No goals
5. Very noncommittal
6. Unenthusiastic
7. Bad reputation
8. Lacks confidence
9. Lacks self-esteem.
10. Bad temper
11. Highly pessimistic
12. Never willing to try.
13. Bad attitude

Obviously, the people with the “right stuff,” as opposed to those with the “wrong stuff” are much better suited to helping themselves and others to more likely succeed in life.

#### **Student-Related Information: Is it a Good Fit or Not?**

In 2005, Parish and Parish surveyed more than 700 ninth graders, nearly 500 sixth graders, and the teachers of 1,700+ 1st through 3rd graders from a large Midwestern school district, on a five question survey, which had students rank themselves (or their teachers rank their students) from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”) on the following five questions:

1. How often do you treat your teachers with respect?
2. How often do you do your best to learn.
3. How often do you work cooperatively with others?
4. How often do you treat other teachers with respect?

## 5. How often are you happy at school?

The results of this study were truly incredible! More specifically, the “happier” half of the students were found to be ranked significantly higher than the lower half of the students on all five (5) questions across all age groups and grade levels. These findings, reported in this study, definitely lend great support to the notion that if teachers wish to be happy themselves, then they should definitely endeavor to do all in their power to help their students to be happy too.

Of course, there are many instances, and various ways, that various groups can receive “helpful hints” regarding how they can improve their performance in various areas. For instance,

Parish (Fall 1988), Parish and Parish (Winter 1989), Parish and Dopp (2006), Parish & Mahoney (June 2007a), and Parish and Truszkowski (Spring 2007) all described how teachers could share with students “helpful tips” regarding how they could become more motivated in school.

Parish & Mahoney (June 2006a) further described a list of ways that teachers could help students to become more engaged and/or more motivated in their schoolwork and other school-related activities.

Parish & Mahoney (2007b) also proposed a list of ways that students could do for themselves to enhance their own level of motivation in school as well as elsewhere too. More specifically, this article lines out twelve great ways for students to motivate themselves from within.

Parish (Summer 1995) Dopp & Parish (Spring 2007), Parish and Baker (December 2007), Parish, Henke, and Dopp (December 2007) and Parish and Hernandez (December 2007) further provided more “helpful hints” regarding things that student-athletes need to know and/or do in order to perform better in competition as a general rule.

Parish and Mahoney (June 2007c) also provided some viable ideas regarding how to engage in more effective and efficient actions and/or attitudes by developing certain “choice” behaviors that are intended to avoid stress and more likely achieve much success.

Finally, Parish and Parish (Spring 1989) added a substantial discourse on ways to help underachievers succeed, all of which seem to be in keeping with Glasser’s Choice Theory and Reality Therapy too.

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All of these “helpful hints” that were cited above, should be added to students’ and student athletes’ arsenal of ways to formulate better ways to do better in school as well as elsewhere too.

Besides all of the “helpful hints” for students that are currently available, Parish and Parish (1989) pointed out that teachers opening doors to learning for their students is likely not enough, since it is still up to the students who must decide to enter or not. Truly, needed learning may not actually occur until the students choose to learn whatever it is they need to succeed. This is quite in accord with

William Glasser's (1980) remarks that people don't learn what they don't want to learn, but that counseling and/or teaching will more likely occur once they discover that they can actually learn a better way. In addition, another key facet is the level of interest of the students, as well as the level of "connectedness" that exists between the students and their teachers. Basically, people don't often care about what others know, until they know that they really do care for them . . . genuinely and wholeheartedly. Yes, it's true, that when those in charge try to make it tougher, students will not likely submit to such treatment, but they'll open up like a sunflower to the rays of the Sun, when they see that the task at-hand could be interesting to many or be a lot of fun!

So, how long have we actually been aware that this last statement was so?

For most--if not all--of my lifetime I was strongly urged not to make friends with my clients. Rather, as a psychologist, I was always taught to maintain a respectable distance, and never seek to befriend them. All of that changed, however, in 1965. What happened then? The book, **Reality Therapy** was published, which strongly urged reality therapists to, first and foremost, **befriend** their clients. Why did Dr. Glasser take this position while the rest of psychology burned? Because we more readily learn to like, trust, and value those who are our friends, like few other people we know! Why?

Well, to answer this might take a lot of time, so sit back and let's talk all about it. You see, when officials send someone to see a psychologist, leaving the client to think that he will have to listen to him/her, obey him/her, and also look for ways to unobtrusively undermine him/her, it would be generally impossible to develop a friendly relationship between the two under those conditions.

Instead, as outlined above, the reality therapist is not expected to shout out orders or threaten him/her with time in the brig or in solitary confinement. Such methods create foes or enemies, and all that might arise from that is a bunch of woes . . . for all concerned.

Where Reality Therapy shines, however, is when the individual or client comes to the therapist voluntarily and the reality therapist doesn't judge him/her, or order him/her around, but in contrast, asks lots of questions and aids the person in need of help with a friendly smile and a real concern for his/her clients' well-being and/or lifestyle. Before we go any further, however, we need to establish all the things that real friends do, plus how they will likely go a really long way to help you!

## **What is a Friend?**

**Someone who helps you to like yourself again and again,  
that is the best test for defining a true friend!  
They're usually people that you'd highly recommend,  
for they wouldn't do anything that would likely offend.**

**A friend is one upon whom you could always depend,**

**for s/he will always try to defend you like a mother hen!  
Why they do what they do, you may not comprehend,  
but thankfully they'll do so until who-knows-when?**

**God grants us such friends who will last 'til the end,  
and He will continue to do so until who-knows-when?  
So, when you're tired, broken, and trying to mend,  
know that God won't send angels. He'll just send a friend!**

**Never try to count the number of friends that you can lend,  
or whether or not their fashions match the current trend.  
Just think about what more you can do to repay them,  
and when they say the prayer, remember to say . . . Amen.**

**Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC**

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## **Tell Others What Your Friends Actually Mean to You and Me**

**Friendships will always be important to you and me,  
and so it will always be throughout all eternity!  
Especially if they're members of the church,  
since they seldom leave us in a lurch!**

**I know that they will never let us down,  
nor look down upon us with a disturbing frown.  
Instead, they usually smile at whatever we do,  
and never, ever treat us like silly, old fools!**

**They're always willing to go the extra mile or two,  
and to really help us out, as a general rule,  
which lifts them high above others in our view,  
as they always seek to do what Jesus would do.**

**How fortunate we are to enjoy the friendship of so many,  
and receive blessings, not just a few, but plenty.**



**Truly, God has definitely smiled down upon you and me,  
as well as on the members of our families.**

**While I don't know what the future might bring,  
we are convinced that our friends will make it interesting.  
Yes, while death is a certainty, that's for sure,  
but hopefully, we'll all be returned to God if we endure!**

**Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC**  
February 13, 2013

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## **FRIENDS**

**Birthdays come and birthdays go,  
but friends are forever, this much I know.  
Even after our mortal life ends,  
we'll still be remembered by our dearest friends!**

**This is the way that God intended it to be,  
and so it should be throughout all eternity.  
Friends always strive to be there 'til the end,  
as they remain by our side again and again!**

**Yes, our true friends will always help us to succeed,  
and remove any obstacles that may actually impede.  
They'll always look out for what's best for us,  
and may be the only people that we can actually trust!**

**Truly, our friends can be our greatest treasure,  
for they'll always love us well beyond measure.  
We all need such friends, that's for sure,  
whose love for us will always endure.**

**Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D.**  
January 24, 2010

## **Ways to Discern Friends from Foes**

**Who is it that means a great deal to you?**

**Is it because they always assist you and others too?**

**Do they frequently do things that others would avoid,  
or do they help out, even when others become annoyed?**

**Truly, some people like to bend over backwards for you,  
while others seem to have little interest in what you do.**

**The former group we refer to as our dearest friends,  
but the latter group can't wait until they see our back ends.**

**One of our life goals is to figure out which is which,  
before some of them might leave you shot in a ditch.**

**Of course, our real friends would never do that,  
but our would-be foes are often tempted to leave us flat.**

**So, how might we know which are our friends or not?**

**Well, the answer is clear, those who look after us a lot.  
For friends spend much of their time being very friendly,  
while our foes seem to leave us feeling really empty!**

**Perhaps what we need is some ways to separate the two,  
so that we can readily discern who's a friend and who's a fool?**

**To this end, then, we need to discern,  
who would help us endlessly, vs. who would leave us to burn?**

**Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC, Editor, *IJCTRT*  
2022, 42 (2), p. 11.**

## **FRIENDS . . . An Overview**

**“Making friends” has been the pivotal starting point of Reality Therapy ever since it was conceived by Dr. William Glasser in 1965. Since then, much has been said about why the development of friendship is so important. For instance, Parish (1990) reported that there were two basic reasons why we need to “Make friends” if we wish to effectively counsel or teach others.**

**First, we develop friendships in order to avoid psychological reactance with our clients and/or with our students. More specifically, we become friends so that we might be able to avoid the idea that we are externally intruding our values and beliefs upon someone else, for if we are perceived to be doing so, the client or student could easily reject our advice and assume a position directly counter to whatever we say.**

**Second, we develop friendships because we want to simply convey to others the idea that we wish to facilitate our clients and/or our students in their efforts to obtain their own personally-identified goals. Truly, it’s their goals, and their internal commitments to them, that will help them to “seize the day”. Our efforts are simply intended to be “friendly,” as we seek to facilitate and assist our clients and students in achieving their own desired goals!**

**Having said all this about the need for friendship in counseling and classroom, as well as in other settings, too (e.g., the home, the football field, etc.), the thing that really hasn’t been completely addressed is “What is a friend?” or “What do people actually do to become friends?” To answer these questions, the following “Friendly Alphabet” is offered so that greater understanding is more readily achieved regarding the need for “friendship” as one attempts to engage in Reality Therapy-type activities, regardless of where they might be.**

# **The Friendly Alphabet**

Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC

## **FRIENDS . . .**

**Accept you for who you are, and who you want to be.**

**Believe in you and see you the way that you wish to be seen.**

**Count on you because that's what friends should always do.**

**Demand nothing, but give you more than you could ever imagine.**

**Encourage you when others shrug or gladly give you a great big hug!**

**Feels joy, 'til the end, that's what makes them good ol' friends!**

**Goes the extra mile and then ten more after that.**

**Helps you when you're down, and never looks at you with a frown.**

**Ignores others' complaints and insists you're as good as any saint.**

**Just hangs in there for you like no one else would ever do.**

**Keeps you in mind and often checks to see if you're doing fine.**

**Loves you like few others do and strives to do their best for you.**

**Moves mountains for you and helps you to smell the daisies too!**

**Never gives up and plans to meet with you at the top!**

**Openly tells others about the good things you do, as a general rule.**

**Pleases you with all that they do both at home and at school.**

**Quickly determines what you need then retrieves it at top speed!**

**Saves the best for you because they love you through and through.**

**Understands your wants and needs and never wishes to impede!**

**Values you and all do and would do anything they could to please you.**

**Welcomes you with a big smile and tells you that you've got great style.**

**Xplains the facts about what you do yet loves you still and always will!**

**You can't be replaced, that's for sure since you're always so sincere.**

**Zealously endeavors to be your biggest fan has always been their plan!**

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**Next, are examples that seem to demonstrate what FRIENDS often do to show their LOVE for you!**

**What is a true friend? Who are your real friends? This article will provide insights/answers regarding these questions and much more.**

**Friends are the ultimate form of "social security."**

**The only thing better than aged steaks is old friends.**

**Don't just count your friends. Rather, figure out which friends you can count on.**

**The best present you can receive from a friend is a smile.**

**A friend is someone who helps you to like yourself.**

**A friend is someone who sees you the way you wish to be seen.**

**The most valuable gift you can get is a friend.**

**The most valuable gift you can give is to be a friend to someone in need of one.**

**Friends are people who choose to be by you even when they'd rather be somewhere else.**

**Good friends are usually great listeners.**

**Friendship is like mortar that binds people together.**

**Friends generally avoid asking questions and try not to make judgments.**

**Good friends look for the good in you, and then tell others when they find it.**

**True friends expect the best from us, and we try our best not to disappoint them.**

**Friends are our memories greatest treasures.**

**Real friends provide us with the best form of "No-Fault" insurance.**

**Friends try to keep you on your toes, but never treat you like a real heel.**

**Friends are our finest gift from God!**

**Unlike most things that we have today, friends will often last a lifetime.**

**Friends are often visually impaired when it comes to seeing our faults &/or shortcomings.**

**Friends never laugh at you. Rather, they always laugh with you.**

**When you walk with a friend, it's usually easier to smell the daisies.**

**Friends rarely give advice, but often give a helping hand.**

**Friends try to avoid being hardheaded and hardhearted.**

**Friends are our most priceless treasure. Does that make sense.**

**Friends are like the sunshine that chases the clouds away.**

**People who won't say anything nice about their friends, soon discover they don't have any.**

**Friends generally realize that the best sermon is a good example.**

**Friends usually have the last word . . . when they say, "I love you."**

**Shouldn't we all be friends? Shouldn't we all be willing to go the extra mile like friends always do? Maybe this paper will nudge you or someone else in that direction. If so,**

maybe it has served its purpose. For the world will be a better place as we consider our friends first, and strangers (who will be our friends soon) not very far behind.

Written by: **Thomas S. Parish, Ph.D., CTRTC.**

Title: **Examining the Basic Principles of Friendship.**

Published in *Education*, 1996, v. 113, (2), p.1.

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Another “friendly” exhibit for your consideration:

## **We’ll Be There!**

When things go badly and you’re in great despair,  
just call us what and we’ll be there.  
When life presents you with nightmare after nightmare,  
just give us a ring and we’ll be there!

Sure, life can often seem very unfair,  
that’s why we’re here, and we’ll be there.  
You might think that sometimes we’re really square,  
but that doesn’t matter, ‘cause we’ll soon be there!

So, when things seem to be more than you can bare,  
kindly call us up, and we’ll be there.  
Just think of us and know that we care,  
and be assured that before long, we’ll be there!

Friends stop others from pulling out their hair,  
and can calm others down after a bad scare.  
So, remember your friends—like us—in your prayer,  
but even if you don’t, we’ll still be there!  
With love,

**Tom & Gay Parish**

P.S., This brief note was mailed out the week before Christmas, 2007, to our friends and neighbors in Topeka, Kansas, where we had just moved to six months earlier. Given the time of year, my wife and I felt this would be a nice “icebreaker” to informally introduce ourselves. The rest is history.

**ICEBREAKERS are**  
**basically simple sayings**  
**that compel people to talk**  
**about it, and very quickly**  
**create friendships as they**  
**do. My favorite is: “You**  
**are my Friend . . . I just**  
**don’t know your name**  
**yet! What’s yours?”**

**See other examples on the next page . . .**





In the Winter of 2000, I gave the “Annual Presidential Address” to the Mid-Western Educational Research Association in Chicago, Illinois. The text of this presentation appears in the Mid-Western Educational Researcher (V. 13, #1, p.13.), plus here. Notably, however, the title of the paper says it all! More specifically, the question is posed, “How can we improve education?” Simply stated, it says, “You don’t need to get tougher, you just need to get “better connected”. The reader is now invited to read this (slightly modified) brief note in order to determine why this is so.

## **Presidential Address**

### **How to Improve Education: Don’t Get Tough; Just Get Connected**

Does everyone really realize how students are being victimized by the educational methods currently being used by teachers throughout many of our nation’s classrooms? Does anyone know how we might reverse these negative effects on students? Well, to begin with, Basic, Balaz, Uzelac, and Jugovac (1997) reported that students in the first four grades often place great value in their school, but in later grades the importance of school was found to greatly diminish. Concurrently, school drop-out rates and gang memberships—among older youth—have been increasing, particularly in larger urban areas. Hence, students are gradually withdrawing from, or abandoning, their respective classrooms, even though some might actually remain there, but why is this so?

The teachers are effectively conveying the 3 R’s (i.e., reading, w(riting), and a(rithmetic) may not be the problem. Rather, it appears that they may simply be using **external control psychology** improperly, and therefore failing to fulfill their students’ various needs, as well as their own needs too. This occurs when teachers don’t care (or are unaware) that as they PUNISH students through the use of **external operant conditioning**, they are also associating themselves improperly with it, and therefore failing to fulfill their students’ various needs as well as their own. This occurs when teachers don’t consider (or are unaware) that as they PUNISH students through the use of **external operant conditioning**, they are also associating themselves (their classrooms, their schools, & what they teach) with the punitive actions’ associated with negative feelings via **external classical conditioning**. Thus, as teachers engage in punitive acts two things generally happen:

Allport (1985) urged that “anti-locutions” (i.e., hurtful words), avoidance of one another, exclusion of each other, and/or psychological or physical violence be strictly avoided because they usually foster “disconnectedness” between all concerned. Instead, we must all seek to be each other’s “friend.” According to Maya Pines (1977), everyone needs a friend, particularly the students who are thought to be “at-risk” of school failure.

In order to determine if teachers are succeeding in "connecting" with their students, and possibly gaining entry into their students' "Quality Worlds," the "Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire" (Parish & Stallings, 1992) is highly recommended for those teachers who really care about his/her students and wish to know how the students perceive his/her actions toward his/her students, and also determine if there are areas that the teacher-in-question might need improvement if greater connectedness between the students and the teacher-in-question is desired. For the items on the "Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire" the reader may also turn to pages 5 and 6 of the present article to also see the items that appear on this scale too.

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## **COUPLES COUNSELING IN THE LOSS OF A CHILD: A CHOICE THEORY AND AN EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY APPROACH**

Ileana Ungureanu, Ph.D., M.D, LMFT, and Patricia Robey, Ed.D, LPC

### **Abstract**

The death of a child is one of the most painful events a parent can experience. In addition to its impact on the individual, it takes a heavy toll on the couple's or parents' relationship. Research shows that grieving can impact the couple on multiple levels, including emotional and meaning-making levels. Because the death of a child activates attachment needs in both partners, it is very difficult to reach out across the pain to meet a partner's needs when both are faced with grieving at the same time. The authors will describe a model to work with bereft parents where the emotional part of grief will be addressed through an Emotionally Focused therapy approach (Johnson, 2020) and the meaning-making part will be addressed through a Choice Theory perspective (Glasser 1998, 2000). A composite case will be used to exemplify the proposed model.

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Loss is as ubiquitous as life itself, which is all part of our experience as human beings. Grief, the complex after-state we enter after experiencing loss, is as omnipresent as the loss itself. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a pioneer in loss and dying conceptualization in the mental health field, noted that "The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal, and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to." (Kubler-Ross, E., & Kessler, D., 2014, p.230).

Loss of a child, a son, a daughter, is considered to be one of the most traumatic events that can occur in one's life (Oliver, 1999). A parent described their experience with these poignant words "The death of a child is like losing your breath and never catching it again. It's a forever panic attack feeling your heart dying as your soul is screaming for them and no matter what you try to do, you continue to lose your mind" (Facebook, Grieving Mothers, 2017). In a letter to a friend, Freud used these words to describe his experience in losing a child during the influenza pandemic: "The loss of a child is a trial from which the adult never recovers because he finds that part of himself, which he projected in his descendent, is amputated. The death of a child seems against nature; when mourning the loss of an offspring the parent realizes that the natural order of the generations has been reversed. This mourning involves a pain that escapes both words and thoughts. Even the language does not have a name for those who have lost a child. It has terms for those who have lost the adults they loved (orphan, widow, widower), but there is no word to name the parents that have lost their child or the child that has lost a sibling." (Freud, as cited in Ricoeur and Gentet 1996, p. 260).

As a result of COVID, the experience of grief and loss is at a higher level of awareness now than we were used to seeing. Loss, and consequently, grief, is inescapable in time of a pandemic, as well as in a more normative time. At the time this article is written, the Center for Disease Control reported that there have been 6,903,307 deaths around the world due to COVID. According to UNICEF data, out of the total COVID deaths, about 34,500 (0.5%) were children and adolescents under the age of 20 ([Child mortality and COVID-19 - UNICEF DATA](#)).

## **Prolonged Grief Disorder**

Many of us who are living with grief and loss know that it includes not only the loss of loved ones, but also the loss of a way of living. This raises awareness of our own vulnerability as we realize that our assumptions about how safe we are in general, and the control we have over our lives and/or the lives of our children, is being challenged.

As mental health professionals we must be prepared to meet the growing demand to help our clients and our communities to cope with grief and loss. In fact, in recognition of the importance and large scale of this global phenomenon, the mental health scientific community has decided to amend the grief diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), specifically to address what is expected to be a common occurrence for years to come because of the loss, grief and trauma we experienced during the COVID pandemic years. The new diagnosis is called prolonged grief disorder (<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/educational-resources/dsm-5-fact-sheets>).

## **Bereavement Models**

While the main bereavement models address individual processes (Neimeyer, 2021; Rando, 1993; Rubin, Malkinson, & Witztume, 2011; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Worden, 2018), there are not a lot of models that focus their attention on relational aspects in grief, particularly on couple/parents that have lost a child. Moreover, the main models focus more on cognitive processing of grief and communication styles in the couple as predictors of healthy grieving and couple satisfaction (Essakow & Miller, 2013; Gilbert, 1989, 1997; Hooghe & Neimeyer, 2011; Oliver, 1999; Neimeyer et al, 2010). Other models propose tasks for mourning as a guide to grief counseling (Worden, 2018; Walsh, 2004). Only a few authors have proposed more integrated cognitive and emotional models regarding how grief works and the impact of grief on couple's dynamics (Hooghe, Neimeyer, & Rober, 2012; Ungureanu & Hall; Ungureanu & Sandberg, 2010). Other authors looked specifically at dynamics in couple's sexual relationships and the level sexual satisfaction, especially after the loss of a child (Hagemeister & Rosenblatt, 1997, Schwab, 1992).

In their article on religious and spiritual beliefs as coping mechanisms in couple's bereavement after the loss of a child, Ungureanu and Sandberg (2010) explored the loss of the child as an attachment injury (Johnson, 2020). The authors noted that "there is often a tearing apart and turning away among couples facing this devastating loss. A chasm may quickly begin to develop between partners as the shock wears off and the mourning begins. Often the experience of pain and sorrow prevent both partners from reaching out to give or receive the closeness, support, and understanding each needs in this time of grief." (Ungureanu & Sandberg, 2010, p. 313). Addressing the emotional part of grief and an attachment emphasis in understanding couple dynamics for the need to express deep emotions (sorrow, grief, pain, guilt/shame) that seems too much to bear, while at the same time being present, responsive, and engaged with the partner may be very beneficial to the healing process.

Hooghe, Neimeyer, and Rober (2012) indirectly touched on the issue of emotional processing. In their qualitative in-depth study of a couple grieving with unexpected loss of a child, they used the image of "cycling around an emotional core of sadness" and while naming the core as emotional ('sadness') they still stayed focused more upon cognitive processes (e.g., communication, meaning reconstruction) (Hooghe, Neimeyer, & Rober, 2012, p.1220).

## **An Integrative Model for Working with Grief in Couples Counseling**

Ungureanu and Hall (2020) proposed a model that integrates working with different aspects of the grief experience, that is, exploring emotions through an Emotionally Focused couple therapy approach (Johnson, 2020) and shared meaning-making as a tool toward creating a sense of togetherness and sharing the burden, as opposed to disconnection and isolation and an acceptance of the oscillation between confronting and avoiding grief processes (Stroebe & Schut) that is happening in the life experience of bereft couples. Ungureanu and Hall (2020) suggested that this should be reflected in the therapeutic process.

In this paper, the authors will introduce a model of working with grief with couples who have experienced the loss of a child. Specifically, we will address the two aspects of processing loss that are at the core of the grief experience and therefore need to be addressed in counseling: emotional processing through an Emotionally Focused therapy perspective (Johnson, 2020) and meaning-making through a Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998) point-of-view.

### **Choice Theory and Reality Therapy**

Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998) offers an explanation for human behavior and motivation. According to Glasser, people are genetically motivated to meet five basic needs, which Glasser defined as love and belonging, power, freedom, fun, and survival. We meet these needs through very specific and idealized people, places, things, values, and beliefs that are stored as significant memories in what Glasser referred to as our *Quality World* pictures. These pictures develop over time through our experiences and may or may not be realistic or attainable. For example, many people have an idealized picture of what it would be like to be a parent to a specific child, but that picture may never be met after the loss of the child due to events that are outside of their control. From a therapeutic perspective, it is important for therapists to note that people maintain and are motivated to behave in response to these pictures regardless of whether they are attainable or not. The significance of this in counseling is not to deny the importance of the idealized picture, but to work with client(s) to understand the significance and meaning of what it is that they want, and what need(s) may be met if they had what they wanted, even if the specific picture is not attainable. The picture may never go away, but the therapist can help the clients work through the emotion of grief and begin to find new purpose and meaning in a life that does not include the physical presence of the child they are grieving.

According to Glasser (1998), all behavior serves a purpose – to act on the world, to get what we want (our *Quality World* pictures), which satisfies one or more of our basic needs. Our behavior consists of four components, which Glasser referred to as *Total Behavior*: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology. Our feelings and physiology are instrumental in providing information that something is going well or going poorly and are influenced by what we are doing and/or what we are thinking. We can only directly control or change our feelings and physiology by changing what we are doing and thinking. However, we understand the significance and importance of sharing the emotional experience along with the thinking attached to grief, trauma, and other situations that are emotionally painful.

An axiom of Choice Theory (1998) is that most, if not all, human problems are based on relationship problems, including the relationship with self. Problems occur when we are trying to get our needs met in our attempt to control or change ourselves, others, or situations that are outside of our control. The Reality Therapy process is based upon the understanding of human behavior through the lens of Choice Theory (Glasser, 2000). Therefore, we know that clients are most likely coming to sessions with problems that are rooted in underlying problems with relationships. When counseling with Choice Theory, after establishing a therapeutic relationship with clients, we also need to work with them to

identify the presenting concern, eventually shifting the focus to finding the meaning, wants, and needs associated with their concerns, and then work with clients to identify and make plans for taking a new direction.

### **Emotionally Focused Therapy**

Emotionally Focused therapy (EFT) (Johnson, 2020) is an experiential systemic model that has its roots in attachment theories, specifically in adult attachment theories. As its author states "EFT is integrative; it looks within and between" (Johnson, 2020, p.14). EFT is interpersonal and expands experience and interactions through its focus on process and emotions, a necessity for creating a safe therapeutic environment. This will result in a corrective emotional experience in the therapy room first, choreographed by the therapist, which will then be translated in the relationship between partners. "EFT is a way of seeing clients and their relationships through a systemic attachment and a humanistic experiential frame, and a way of being with each client in a way that promotes safety and growth, as these variables are understood in terms of both frames" (Johnson, 2020, P. 50).

The main macro-intervention in EFT is called the EFT tango. EFT therapists propose that every time an emotional reaction arises in the session, or it needs to be brought into the session, its processing is encouraged and supported through its 5 'dance moves': reflect present process (what is happening in the present moment as the emotion arises for both partners); explore deeper, new emotion that surfaces in the session; invite enactments between the couple/family members (express the pain of grief to each other); process what happened during the enactments (how the experience was different, how did it feel on a deeper level); and finally validate, integrate and reflect on the entire experience ('tie a bow'). This approach validates the emotional experience that inevitably comes with loss, normalizes grief in all its aspects, and contributes to a deeper clarity of meaning, where emotions are part of the continual experience of grief.

### **Case Study of a Grieving Couple**

To exemplify how the two components of grief work, the authors have created a composite case that has aspects from different real cases the authors have been working with over the years. Through this example, we will demonstrate how the integration of Choice Theory and Emotionally Focused work can help clients understand the meaning and purpose of their behavior in response to their grief. Through sharing their emotions and thought processes in managing their grief, the couple can gain an understanding of one another and create a renewed sense of togetherness and peace.

#### Halina and Jason

Halina and Jason came to therapy to get help with "communication" and getting "unstuck" in their relationship. Halina and Jason were professionals in their early forties and had been married for 10 years. They reported--that for the most part--their marriage was good and fulfilling for both of them. They waited to have children until they were settled financially and 6 years into their marriage, they got pregnant. All things went well with the pregnancy, but on the day their baby was born, there was a problem with the delivery and baby Angela, their "little Angel," died a few hours after being born.

Halina and Jason came home with their arms empty, a big hole in their hearts and a newly experienced distance that seemed like a chasm between them. Their extended families rallied around them, but Halina and Jason explained that their life was never the same after their loss. After a few months, Halina went back to her business and tried to "go through the motions" of life as best as she could. The images of her baby dying and holding her lifeless little body were always in her mind. Halina stated that there was a physical sensation also, a feeling of a "rock pressing on her heart," and sometimes it was even hard



to breathe. Jason went back to work, taking on more projects than usual, and staying late at work, until he collapsed at work one day and subsequently had to take medical leave. The doctors said it was exhaustion and probably related to his response to the loss of their baby. The doctors strongly recommended therapy. Jason initially refused, but since Halina insisted that they needed to do something to address what was happening to them, he accepted, but "only for her."

During the first sessions, the therapist strived to create a safe space for the couple, in which they could explore their emotions and their thoughts about the loss they suffered. The therapist validated where they were at in the grieving process and noted the differences in the way they dealt with their grief. The therapist was able to converse more with Halina at the beginning but always acknowledged Jason's presence and validated his willingness to be there, even though it was obvious that it was very difficult for him. In the first sessions, the therapist 'danced' the tango more with Halina and only gently invited Jason to join with them when he was ready.

Halina did most of the talking in therapy. Jason listened but rarely talked. Halina stated that she was barely able to talk to Jason about their daughter, and gradually any topic became difficult to address. She talked about the distance that crept between them and seemed to become wider and wider. She reported that there was no longer any physical touch. She said she didn't remember what sex felt like, but then minimized the situation, stating, "really, who even cares about that?"

Halina talked about how her arms hurt at the absence of her little Angel and that even after almost 4 years the nursery seemed to be still waiting for its occupant to come home. Jason appeared to be listening intently, but he was looking out of the office window. The therapist noticed him holding back tears but when asked about them, Jason replied that his "allergies are really bad this year."

Halina reported that she was very concerned for Jason. The medical leave was getting longer and longer; Jason didn't want to go back to work. But what she was most concerned about was what was going on with him and what was going on with them. Halina had many questions: Will he ever be OK? Will she be ok? Will their marriage survive? Will they ever be able to have another child? What really happened during the delivery? Whose fault was it? Could she have done anything differently? Is God mad at her, at them? Maybe she's not meant to be a mother after all!

Jason continued to listen intently but didn't say much. When Halina asked him questions directly, he would only respond with "yes," "no," "maybe," "who knows."

The therapist understood that both Halina and Jason were choosing coping behaviors that were their best attempt to get their needs met during this difficult time. Both Halina and Jason had already created a picture of Angela in their quality worlds, had pictured themselves as being parents, had visions of their daughter growing up, and were looking forward to a joyful life with her. They had no behaviors in place to deal with this loss and had to find ways to cope.

In his effort to manage his grief, Jason relied on his old behaviors during times of stress - discounting his feelings and keeping busy, maintaining a position of being strong, disconnecting emotionally from Halina and others, and focusing on work in his effort to avoid the discussion of the loss and to diminish his painful emotional response by thinking of other things. Eventually this behavior had a physiological toll, leading to his collapse and inability to work.

In her effort to manage her grief, Halina's behavior was also to try to normalize the situation by going back to work. Her efforts to reach out to Jason were rebuffed and added to her painful sense of emptiness and isolation. Halina's grief and self-blame eventually turned inward.

After establishing the relationship and getting a sense of the story from Halina's point of view, the therapist asked what they hoped to get as an outcome in therapy. This was an attempt to shift the focus from the problems related to the couple's grief and emotional response to creating a new picture of how they could work together to strengthen their relationship and move forward.

In response to this question, Halina said she wanted them to be like they used to be, to have fun together again, to look at each other and know what they think without saying, and to be able to talk about their little Angel and not to have to pretend she never existed. When the therapist looked at Jason for an answer, he replied "Whatever Halina wants."

Although Jason's response seems non-committal and as if he is not invested in the process, this was an opportunity for the therapist to acknowledge that the couple was actually in agreement about the outcomes they hoped to get from therapy. This is the beginning of a re-creation of their relationship. Through the Emotionally Focused process, Halina and Jason began to understand and accept one another again, which creates a safe space for them to begin to renew their commitment to one another through creating new pictures of what they used to enjoy about their relationship and how to take steps toward healing and growth.

The therapist worked from a view of grieving as being a dual process (Stroebe and Schut, 1999). Stroebe and Schut (1999) described grief as being an oscillation between loss-oriented processes such as intrusion of grief, crying, breaking bonds, denial/avoidance of life affirming acts, and restoration-oriented processes (doing new things, attending to life changes, new roles, distraction from grief), rather than a linear process. As the grief is processed, the restoration tasks are more prevalent, but the feeling of loss can resurface anytime, at times of commemoration, for example, but also at special events (holidays, birthdays) where the loved one is missing. The therapist assessed that Halina and Jason were currently in different oscillation phases, Halina being more in the life affirming, restoration one and Jason more into the loss-oriented tasks.

Halina and Jason's therapist was using this framework to conceptualize what was happening in her therapy room and where the couple was in their grieving process. Furthermore, she used the integrated Emotionally Focused (Johnson, 2020) and Choice Theory models to treat this couple and help them achieve their goal.

To intensify and process an emotional experience, an EFT therapist may use metaphors for evocative responses and heightening, or intensifying, emotions to allow access to deeper, unacknowledged emotions (Johnson, 2020). With Halina, the therapist chose the image that she came up with, 'the pain of the empty arms', no baby to cradle. When Halina was ready and the therapeutic relationship was strong enough to allow it, the therapist asked Halina to tell her about that specific pain, to describe how she felt in the moment when she thought about it, when she saw herself with empty arms. Halina talked about her difficulty to describe the pain of the absence, but reported that it felt "overwhelming," and "all-encompassing". She said she felt like she was "drowning in the absence of her baby in her arms." The therapist invited Halina to stay longer with the pain and thanked her for being so brave. Halina cried. Jason was paying attention to what was happening but did not reach out to Halina to comfort her.

With the help of the therapist, Halina processed the experience, looked into what happened, and explored the parts that were painful and the parts that helped her continue to feel

connected to her lost baby and to the parts related to motherhood. At the end of this tango, Halina felt hopeful that she would learn how to live better with her pain. The therapist also helped Halina recognize that her self-blame and recrimination was hindering her ability to manage her pain. Halina learned to change her behavior to be kind to herself and comfort herself as part of her healing process.

The therapist checked with Jason. He wasn't directly 'dancing' with them, but he was asked about his experience in witnessing Halina's pain. And so, the 'tango' began for him! Jason was able to say, reluctantly, that it was painful to see Halina's tears. The therapist explored the thoughts and emotions he was experiencing in the present moment. What was painful about Halina's tears? Was there something that was touched in him? Did he want to stop the tears? How about his own tears? Jason said he had no tears, and that he felt anger! He was able to say he was angry at a world that could go on without little Angela, angry at Halina who continued to go through the motions of life, and angry with the doctors who couldn't save their daughter. In contradiction to the emotion that would ordinarily be expected from what he had said, however, he continued to express his anger in a leveled, controlled, calm way.

The therapist understood that this was how the present moment in grieving looked for Jason and, therefore, followed his 'tango moves'. In his effort to manage his grief, Jason had relied on his old behaviors during times of stress, discounting his feelings and keeping busy, maintaining a position of being strong, disconnecting emotionally from Halina and others, and focusing on work in his effort to avoid the discussion of the loss and to diminish his painful emotional response by thinking of other things. The therapist deepened the emotion to see if Jason could access his pain, and to what extent, and then processed with him how it was to put in words that 'boiling anger' and at the same time validating his experience.

At this time in the therapeutic process, the 'tango' was mostly danced by each partner with the therapist. As the treatment advanced, the couple was better able to 'tango' with each other and to share their experience of pain. They were also better able to accept the 'emotional core of sadness' in each other, and in their relationship too (Hooghe, Neimeyer, & Rober, 2012), as exemplified in this tango. In later stages of therapy, Jason was able to talk about how difficult it was for him to accept that there was nobody in the nursery room, years after the loss, and that Halina asked several times about getting the baby items out. He expressed his anger at her for asking that. He wondered if she forgot, if she didn't care anymore, if she was really ready to move on. How could she do that? And doesn't she see his pain? That he really, deeply cared about this loss and misses little Angela? What kind of person is Halina? Is she still the Halina that he fell in love with? Or is all lost?

After exploring these feelings and understanding the purpose and meaning behind the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors they had been using to deal with their grief, the couple began the process of rebuilding the relationship. They started to create new pictures of what behaviors they could put into action that would bring them closer together.

Halina cried softly and explained that she desperately wanted to be able to go to the nursery together with Jason and to 'face it' as a 'team'. The therapist invited Jason to remain in the presence of these difficult emotions. She offered to metaphorically 'walk with them' in the nursery, creating a visual experience of the process and allowing the couple to talk through the experience as they visualized it. The therapist then asked them how it was to be there together, to hold hands, to feel the physical presence of the other. She validated their feelings and complimented them for their courage to risk going 'into the fire' of their deepest pain. She noted that they made it out alive and together. She told them that this does not mean that they won't experience sadness for the loss of their daughter ever again,

but now they know they will survive it, it's not an all-consuming fire, and even more, they can do it together and not in isolation, hiding from each other.

## **Making Meaning**

This case study demonstrates how the couple was able to move through their grief by sharing their emotional responses to the loss of their child as well as the loss of the intimacy of their relationship, the loss of their identity as parents and as a couple, and an awareness of their vulnerability as they realized that some things were out of their control. The process of exploring emotions in therapy allows clients to be transparent about their emotional experience. The purpose is to ultimately bring couples closer together to move in the direction of a happier, healthier relationship. Emotions are an integral part of total behavior and are addressed through an exploration of the thoughts, actions, and physiology that accompany the emotions.

Meaning comes through this awareness and through the introduction of Choice Theory concepts in therapy that can help the couple understand their motivation and the purpose of their behavior. The couple was taught about their basic needs, quality world pictures, and came to understand that the purpose of their behavior was to get their needs met. Understanding one another through these concepts provided an opportunity to limit judgements and to create opportunities for more effective communication in times of challenge in the relationship.

At the end of the therapeutic process, Halina and Jason felt more connected to each other. They felt more open to reach out to each other when they are in the loss-oriented processes (Stroebe and Schut, 1999). Rather than isolating and being sad separately, they could share their feelings with each other and honor the sadness as an everlasting symbol of their great love for little Angela. They were also better able to work together for the future as they began their restoration process (Stroebe and Schut, 1999). At the 6 month follow up, they told the therapist that they were ready to remodel the nursery room and that they were actually thinking about a 'brother or a sister for little Angela'. To say the least, Jason and Halina were at a better place of integrating their experience of loss. They were not avoiding it but it was also not taking over their life as a couple anymore. They were ready to continue their life story from where little Angela left it for them.

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### **Brief Bios—**

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Patricia A. Robey, Ed.D., LPC, CTRTC, is a full professor of counseling in the Division of Psychology and Counseling at Governors State University. She is also a Licensed Professional Counselor and a senior faculty member and trainer for the Glasser Institute for Choice Theory – US as well as for William Glasser International. Pat has authored and co-authored numerous articles and book chapters on applications of Choice Theory and reality therapy and is lead editor of the book *Contemporary Issues in Couples Counseling: A Choice Theory and Reality Therapy Approach*.

## FISH TALES and CT/RT

Dr Janet Morgan, LPC, NCC, CT/RT, EMDR, MFLC, BC-TMH

The seas were supposed to be fairly calm for halibut fishing in Alaska. A calm sea is normally 1-3 feet of waves, with winds of 3-5 miles per hour, which is very good for halibut fishing in Alaska. Based on my past experiences of halibut fishing in Alaska, I wasn't keen on this charter trip, but my loving husband reassured me that the weather was prime for the three-hour boat ride to the fishing grounds. Our friends that were joining us also reassured me that the weather was safe, and we would catch halibut, my favorite fish to eat. I reluctantly agreed to go.

We met at the boat, the Halibut Spear, (name changed to protect the guilty), at 5:00 a.m., where the captain greeted us with enthusiastic handshakes and welcomed us onto the boat, a sixpack (outfitted for 6 fishermen). I was welcomed to sit in the co-pilot's chair, a chair with shock absorbers, seated next to the captain. The responsibility of that chair is for extra eyes on the sea for unexpected hazards. As I sat in that chair, I immediately realized that the shock absorbers would not do their job as I hit the metal mount for the chair the second I sat down. The next revelation was the intense smell of gasoline. I thought that the smell was overwhelming because of my location inside the cabin of the boat, and that the others in the cabin that were located behind me, couldn't smell it as strongly. I was wrong. Also, as we left the harbor, the cabin door was closed, and I was beginning to regret my decision to go on this trip. The smell of gasoline overpowered all of us and I slid the window open that was next to me and hung my head out like a dog in a car, inhaling the fresh air. As would happen, every time we hit a wave, my face and those behind me received a spray of sea water that drenched us. The thoughts in my head quickly turned negative and I turned and glared angrily at my husband, **blaming** him for making me go on this trip. The captain said the gasoline smell would go away as we traveled but it never did. An hour into the trip the wind started to pick up in Orca Bay. The boat crashed against the waves and the nonexistent shock absorbers sent shooting pain up my spine with every rising wave. The wind quickly intensified from 5 mph to 12 mph and the seas went from 1-3 feet to 3-5 feet and my brain twisted to **criticizing** the captain for his apparent disregard for his passengers and my spiraling negative thoughts of my husband for making me go on this trip. After another two hours of relentless beating by the ocean on our small boat, it started to really rain. Temperatures were in the 50's out in the Gulf of Alaska. The rain only intensified my anger for everyone on the trip and I decided that I would **punish** them by not fishing. I decided not to help clean any fish, not help package any fish, and was trying to create a way to stomp off the pier when we returned to show my displeasure at being coerced into joining this trip. I was blaming everyone for lying to me about the weather, the boat, and anything else I could toss into the negative thinking pattern I was creating. After three hours of halibut fishing, no one had caught a halibut, only adding fuel to my **complaining**. I angrily turned and said to my husband, "never again".

As if things couldn't get worse, they did. The wind surged to gusts over 25mph, and the rain pelted down. The captain decided to go into a sheltered bay where we caught our limit of rockfish, four small halibut and two ling cod.

Pleased he had done his job, we started motoring home. Outside the sheltered bay, we encountered fierce winds and crushing waves. The seas were now 4-6 feet, and we were being badly battered. Next, the two-hour trip back home across Orca Bay was nothing short of miserable. The gasoline smell became overpowering again as the windows and doors to the cabin had to remain closed because of the spraying rain. Again, my negative thoughts

became intensified, and I put all the blame of such a miserable day onto the actions of my spouse!

Finally, the weather became calmer as we entered the Valdez narrows, and the seas returned to 1-3 feet. I was still roiling with anger when I suddenly realized I was responsible for my thoughts. It dawned on me that I made a choice to focus on the negative habits. I also realized that I had chosen to go on the trip. I slowly laughed at myself, realizing that I had spent an entire day choosing to focus on negative thoughts. Not only did I focus the negative thoughts on myself but projected them onto everyone around me. When I looked at everyone else on the boat, I realized that everyone had experienced the same physical discomfort and that negative thoughts can have a powerful effect on relationships along with everything else!

All I had to do was to choose to change my perspective and thinking. I cared for my friends and my loving husband, and my negative behavior would likely hinder, and not help bond our relationships. As we reached the pier to disembark, I adjusted my thinking and took out my filet knives and helped clean fish alongside my friends. We all joined in laughing about the horrible weather on the trip, the overwhelming smell of gasoline and how unpredictable fishing can be at times.

And though I am laughing at it all now, along with my dear husband and my good friends, I am firmly committed not to ever fish again 'just for the halibut'!

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### **Brief Bio—**

Janet Morgan has been a member of the William Glasser Organization since the 1990's. the premise that "we choose our behaviors" drew her toward learning the theory and it's been part of her belief system ever since hearing those words. Janet has worked in many fields, including education, domestic violence, the medical community, social services, school counseling, and private practice. Her passion, however, is working with the military and their families, as that is her personal background. Currently, Janet is in private practice working mainly in Telehealth (video counseling) and training WGI practicum students in CT/RT. Janet also has a passion for doing research in CT/RT and dedicates much of her time to the WGI Research Committee and to those conducting research all over the world.

Commentary to accompany the following pictures:

Picture #1: Words often uttered while fishing . . . "Are we really having FUN yet?"

Picture #2: After fishing, often comes some great rewards! (You can even taste them.)

Picture #3 (not taken): Many say that they simply fish . . . "Just for the halibit." Unfortunately, this picture was never taken, but the sentiment can still be appreciated!





## **THE USEFULNESS OF THE METAPHOR: THE FORK IN THE ROAD**

Robert E. Wubbolding, Ed.D., CTRTC

### **Abstract—**

The Fork in the Road provides a useful application of Choice Theory. By describing two basic choices put in non-technical language, the counselor can make practical Situation A - ineffectual behaviors and Situation B - effective behaviors by describing two metaphors: "Awful Avenue" and "Happiness Highway." Clients are said to be standing at a fork in the road with an existential choice to improve their lives or to choose to live harmful, unhappy lives. This article will be expanded into a book to be published in 2025.

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Human beings naturally speak in metaphors. If a person says, "Set the book on the table" the word "table" is a metaphor for the object that exists independently of the person or the object. The effective teaching of choice theory is inextricably connected to a series of metaphors as explained below. The delivery system, reality therapy, is also taught more effectively with analogies, examples, parables and other figurative language. The Fork in the Road serves as a motivational tool for helping clients and students get "unstuck", "get out of low gear", "get off the dime", and/or "get moving."

### **Metaphors**

What is a metaphor? Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define a metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." The term as used in teaching choice theory and reality therapy includes similes, analogies, anecdotes and other figures of speech. To develop the habit of using metaphors, especially analogies, I habitually watch television looking for such examples. Recently, I heard a politician describe another politician as someone who "flips more than a catfish on a river bank."

This article is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of the nature of metaphors. It is intended to be a discussion of one metaphor emphasized for operationalizing choice theory and implementing reality therapy. Nevertheless, it is helpful to understand the nature of metaphors and their widespread use in our everyday language. I will also explain the assertion that choice theory itself is a metaphorical explanation of the human mind.

### **Everyday Metaphors**

You are invited to count the metaphors in the following concise but conflated statement made by a hypothetical client. "I was unemployed, pounding the pavement, feeling down in the dumps. I did not know which way to turn. My family was on my back and hounding me

to produce an income. I felt out in the cold like a refugee in the Alaskan tundra. I was about ready to bail out when I got a break, a job. When I started, I was the new kid on the block, kinda green. But I soon learned the ropes and climbed a few rungs on the ladder. But then things started to heat up and I was pushed to one side. Before long, I was fired, canned, given the boot. And now, I'm out in the cold again." The metaphors used by the client need no explanation. The meanings are evident. However, it is important to remember that not all metaphors are universal. Many are peculiar and unique to specific cultures and localities. A German friend told me that "a mouse crawled across my liver" meant that she felt depressed. Clearly, this is a metaphor unique to part of the world that not everyone has experienced.

### **Choice Theory as a Metaphorical Explanation**

In teaching about motivational drives, i.e., human needs, they are frequently explained as a system analogous to a five-legged chair. Each leg of the chair represents one of the needs. (I am assuming that the reader is familiar with choice theory and requires no detailed conventional explanation of the various components.) More specifically are individualized desires often referred to as the mental picture album (Glasser, 1998). These wants are translated into 4 levels of behavior (Glasser, 1998) analogous to the wheels of an automobile and the behavioral suitcase comprised of four levels of behavior (Wubbolding, 2000, 2017). Human behavior is an attempt to impact the external world so as to attain the perception of satisfying the wants contained in the quality world or mental picture album.

The perceptual system is described as having several levels such as that of recognizing the world and labeling the incoming information in a plus or minus fashion. Clearly, this detailed metaphor is useful in understanding the neurobiological explanation of the human brain. Daniel Siegel (2010) describes the human mind as "a relational and embodied process that regulates the flow of energy and information" (p.52). This definition appears to be congruent and even serves as a basis for the metaphor known as "Choice Theory."

Below are two clients; one depressed and the other angry and vengeful.

*Depressed Client:* Emily, age 28, unmarried, works for a small company as a mid-level manager. Her employer referred her and stated that Emily is depressed. The employer also described specific evidence for making the referral.

E: Client      C: Counselor

C: Good morning, Emily. It's good to see you. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

E: As I said on the telephone, my employer sent me here because she says I'm depressed.

C: Before we get into a discussion about that issue, tell me a little about your family and anything else you want to say.

E: Do you want to hear all about my childhood?

C: We can get into that sometime if you care to. But let's put that on hold for a while. Tell me about a highpoint in your youth.

E: Well, when I was in high school, I ran track and won a state tournament. It was a moment I will never forget. Now, I would like to hear something about your past.

C: I spent a year in Japan and Korea teaching the US military and another year in Germany teaching the military. I noticed something when you described how you were a track star and won a state tournament. Your eyes opened wide and your face lit up. I have a very important question. When you described your victory just now, you didn't seem down in the dumps. It was like you had an instant when you relived that glorious time. Is that true? Am I right about this? Did you really feel like you were, for an instant, not in the dumps?

E: You're right. For a nanosecond, I was back in high school 10 years ago feeling I like a champion.

C: Wow! "Like a champion." Not just someone who won a track meet. That must have been a dazzling moment in your life, something that made you feel radiant!

E: Yes, it certainly was a time of celebration.

C: So there have been moments when you did not feel depressed.

E: Yes, that was a moment, a wonderful moment.

C: So, in your life you have felt joy which is the opposite of depression. Even one moment is hard evidence that you *can* feel good. How do you feel right now as you talk about it?

E: It feels good. I feel like I'm being recognized again.

C: I think you have implied and have begun to formulate a goal: to feel better.

E: Do you think it is possible?

C: There's not a doubt in my mind that you can feel better. It will take effort. Are you willing to make an effort?

E: Yes, I am. But I have so many problems and obstacles. Do you want to hear about them?

C: Eventually, of course. But first let me present an idea to you. It is as though you are standing at a fork in the road. One path makes things worse. The other path makes things better. Which path would you like to travel? Before you answer, you might be thinking that this is an obvious question in that it contains an obvious answer. And yet, I've asked many people this simple question only to hear a very surprising answer. And so, which road is it for you?

E: For me, it is the road to make things better.

C: Keep in mind, it has its pitfalls, obstacles, and bumps. It is not an easy path, but as you travel it you will find that life becomes easier, happier, and more fulfilling. This is the kind of counseling that I practice: helping people travel what in many ways is "the road less traveled."

E: So how do I get started?

C: First, I need to ask you to explain something. Something very different from what you're probably expecting. Are you ready for it?

E: Yes, of course.

C: What if you were to make your situation worse. What if you made an effort to become more depressed? How would you do it?

E: If I were to do the extreme, I would quit my job, sit around in my apartment, smoke a few packs of cigarettes everyday, maybe even some dope, and not take care of myself.

C: So it is possible for you to screw up your life even more. Can I add something?

E: Of course!

C: You might try to feel sorry for yourself and tell yourself what a bad hand fate has given you. So, you're feelings would be very negative and what you tell yourself would be equally negative. Have you tried anything like this? I'm not asking for details.

E: Yes, I've tried some of these things.

C: And now, another very important question. Are you satisfied with the results that these choices brought you?

E: They only brought me misery.

C: Now I'm here to help you leave some of your misery behind and to make other choices, and to go down "Happiness Highway" rather than "Awful Avenue".

E: You have a way of speaking very concretely. Has anybody ever told you that?

C: I appreciate that observation and yes, once in a while someone says something similar to me. So, here we are or rather here you are, standing at the fork in the road: Awful Avenue or Happiness Highway. What is your choice?

E: As if you didn't know, I'm going down Happiness Highway.

C: Let's talk about the fact that you have made a choice. Keep in mind this is a choice to *begin* a journey. It does not mean that everything is going to be wonderful from now on. As in any journey, you will need luggage: a suitcase of possible successful behaviors that you can take out and use if the going gets rough. More specifically, you will need strategies for getting around obstacles that you might encounter. I'll start you off with one and together we can make a list. I suggest that the first one might be the tendency to give up. When that happens, you will be tempted to give in to depressed feelings and to ask yourself, "What's the use?" What might you do when you are tempted to feel hopeless?

E: I'll get off of my butt and take a brisk walk.

C: You sound very firm about that. I don't want to talk about more obstacles with you right now. There's plenty of time for that discussion. For now it is enough to firm up your decision to take the better fork in the road.

Commentary: This session with Emily illustrates how the counselor attempts to gain the confidence of the client. Built on this successful effort is the first step in helping her operationalize her decision to travel the more successful pathway, i.e., to make specific action plans. Readers are invited to consider alternative ways to implement the metaphor "Fork in the Road". The second client described below presents a more intense experience. Please note the differences and similarities between these clients.

*Angry client:* Lomilda, age 45, has two children ages 23 and 21, and is recently widowed. Her husband, a policeman, was killed by a street thug. Referred by her psychiatrist.

C: Counselor            L: Lomilda

C: Lomilda, it's good to see you again. After reviewing professional details, forms, and professional issues last time, do you have any questions or thoughts today?

L: I had a lot of contact with cops – all races. But only socially. I'm not sure if you can understand me, an Hispanic woman.

C: We'll see. What would be one indication that I understand you and that you feel that this counseling is okay for you?

L: If I can feel comfortable talking to you.

C: That will be a good sign. How do you feel right now – let's say compared to how you felt before you walked in last week?

L: Oh, I feel more relaxed.

C: That sounds like a pretty good start. I'll do everything I can to appreciate you and what you are going through.

L: That's reassuring!

C: Tell me, what did the doctor say when she referred you to me for counseling?

L: She said that the medication is not curing me and that counseling will help. I have doubts whether I should even continue to take it.

C: What is the medication?

L: Zoloff. Do you think I should quit taking this medication?

C: Medication is between you and your doctor. I don't give any advice about whether or not clients should take medication or not.

L: That's what I thought.

C: Tell me about your husband. Tell me whatever you want to talk about – him or how he died. Tell me when you met, etc.

(A lengthy dialogue between the counselor and Lomilda reveals how he died, details about their relationship that was exemplary, they loved each other very much, she prayed everyday for his safety. She related how she is infuriated at his killer, the politicians and their lack of support for the police. She stated how she is angry with God for taking her

husband and leaving her children without a father. She feels abandoned, alone, but mostly infuriated at the killer and that he has been released after a few days. She described her sleepless nights and how she continuously comforts her children even though they are adults.)

C: Lomilda, you have been very honest and frank and my heart breaks for you and your children because of this terribly unjust murder. I wish I could do something to bring him back, but I know I can't. You are carrying a huge burden that you do not deserve. However, I believe I can help you deal with it.

L: That's why I came here.

C: I would like you to think a moment about the fact that it is as if you are standing at a fork in the road. You have two choices: one is to travel the road of misery and the other is to travel the road of less misery. I know this sounds basic, but which road is better for you?

L: The road of less misery of course.

C: I can help you by pointing out some steps that you can make. But keep in mind, you're going to feel bad for a long time. I don't want you to think that there is an easy way. However, I believe that you can have moments of less misery and even moments of joy. I'm not asking you to believe that right now, only are you willing to give it some thought?

L: Yes, I will think about it.

C: Would you be willing to spend a few minutes, 3 or 4 minutes, in the morning and 3 or 4 minutes, in the afternoon to think about lessening your misery about 10%? Do you think that will be useful to you? I'm not saying it's a cure, but will it be a little helpful?

L: Yes, it might be a start.

C: Lomilda, you're ahead of me. My next question was going to be, "do you think this could be a start?"

Commentary: In this session the counselor refrains from helping the client over plan. She is so consumed with her anger, hurt, and fury that helping her to make what is traditionally known as an "action plan" would communicate the message that this will be an easy process. The reader might disagree that it would not communicate such a message. My answer is what Glasser often said, "there is more than one way to do reality therapy." I would wait until the next session and listen for Lomilda's impatience with simply sitting around thinking. Her impatience would communicate to the counselor that she is ready to take action steps.



## Summary and Conclusions

The use of metaphor in mental health practice enjoys a long history. In his excellent book *Using Metaphors in Psychotherapy* Philip Barker (1985) stresses that the use of a metaphor is congruent with right brain/left brain hemisphere brain processes. The left hemisphere is more logical and analytic. The right hemisphere is more holistic. The Fork in the Road appeals to both a logical viewpoint and an intuitive one. In one of Glasser's early video training tapes (a black and white but now lost video) he made a suggestion to an alcoholic who spent many hours in a pub by the name of "The Open Door." He said, "The first thing to do is to close the open door."

As stated above, choice theory is a metaphorical explanation of how the human mind functions. Similarly, reality therapy is best learned, explained, and taught with a simple acronym: WDEP, i.e., Wants, Doing, self-Evaluation, and Planning. Finally, the skilled reality therapist incorporates the theory, method, and techniques of William Glasser and even extends them in new and creative ways.

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## Brief Bio—

Robert Wubbolding, Ed.D., emeritus professor at Xavier University, who served as the Director of Training for the William Glasser Institute (1988-2011). He has also written eighteen (18) books on Choice Theory and/or Reality Therapy, plus he has also written forty-one (41) chapters regarding Choice Theory and Reality Therapy that have appeared in various textbooks in an ongoing effort to increase readers' understanding and insights concerning these topics and how they could be applied in a myriad of ways.

## **INTEGRATING SYSTEMATIC TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE PARENTING (STEP) WITH CHOICE THEORY AND REALITY THERAPY**

Michael H. Fulkerson, LPCC-S, CT/RTC

*The author is a senior faculty member with William Glasser International and the senior director of Therapeutic Community Support Services at RiverValley Behavioral Health based in Owensboro, KY.*

### **Abstract**

This article explains how Choice Theory and the practice of Reality Therapy can be integrated into Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), developed by Dinkmeyer, McKay, and Dinkmeyer in 1997. STEP is a parenting curriculum based on Adlerian Therapy (AT) and Individual Psychology principles which have much common ground with Reality Therapy and Choice Theory. STEP helps parents learn effective ways to build relationships without using external control methods such as punishing, criticizing, and rewarding to control. Like Choice Theory, STEP emphasizes the importance of relationships which are strengthened by encouragement and cooperation. The author outlines how Choice Theory and the practice of Reality Therapy can be integrated into STEP to create an effective model for doing in-home family therapy for children/youth who have been identified as "at risk" for out-of-home placements.

### **Intensive In-Home Family Therapy Program**

This Intensive In-Home Family Therapy approach is 13 weeks in duration. The counselor meets with the family a total of two hours per week. Some time is spent with the parents, some with the child or children, and some with the entire family. Using the acronym **GUTCHECK**, the author created a mnemonic device to make it easier to remember the components of this integrated approach. However, the sequencing of the components should not be seen as something that should be rigidly followed. The sequencing may be more of a recommendation for when the clinician is questioning what to do next. Therapists are encouraged to follow their instincts and adapt these components to the needs of their clients and their families.

### **GUTCHECK perspective on Systematic Training for Effective Parenting using Choice Theory concepts:**

#### **G = Goals**

- Conduct initial session with parent(s) and/or guardian(s) so that one can obtain their perspectives on the child's behavior and to begin forming an alliance with the caregiver. Getting the perspective of both the child and the caregiver is extremely important. The primary caregiver is usually the most reliable source of information when it comes to documenting the action component of a child's total behavior. Yet, when collecting data regarding the other three components (thinking, feelings, and physiological symptoms) of the child's total behaviors, it is probably the child who is the most accurate

source of information. The reality therapist works to build a cooperative relationship with the child while maintaining an alliance with the caregiver.

- Assess level of commitment to the program and negotiate a role in helping. Frequently, families may be referred by the courts, social services, therapists, or case managers. The reality therapist helps identify the quality worlds pictures which have led the family to seek services. By obtaining this information, the reality therapist can then help the family define the role of the therapist in meeting their needs. Wubbolding (2017) refers to five levels of commitment. During the initial sessions, the reality therapist attempts to elicit at least an "I'll Try" level of commitment.
- Cover Expectations of Services. The reality therapist explores and shares expectations of the service, focuses on what the family has tried previously, encourages self-evaluation of past efforts, and attempts to obtain a commitment to a plan to complete the Intensive In-Home Family Therapy Program. Ethical issues pertaining to informed consent are addressed as well as the limitations of confidentiality. Input for the treatment plan is gathered by exploring the quality worlds of the client and family members.
- Administer the Caring Habits Parenting Survey (CHPS). During the initial session, the reality therapist conducts an in-home needs assessment, including the administration of the CHPS survey to help determine the baseline of treatment regarding parental attitudes and actions. The CHPS survey is conducted to help evaluate parenting perspectives within the home environment. The Caring Habits Parenting Survey also helps in evaluating a parent's locus of control: internal locus of control (more consistent with a Choice Theory perspective) vs. external locus of control (based more on external control psychology). Please contact the author if one desires to review the CHPS.
- Establish a Self-Evaluation Plan for the client which will be co-verified by the primary caregivers. The counselor models effective ways of leading family meetings. House rules are established with the children giving substantial input into the development of the rules and consequences in the home. The children are asked to develop the rules and consequences with the understanding that the parents have final approval (Primason, 2004).

Although this approach may appear somewhat permissive to some, its effectiveness is quite paradoxical, because if the children are given some control and input, they are more likely to accept and follow the rules because they see them as their own ideas rather than rules which are being imposed on them.

In addition to increasing their sense of power by giving them input into the rules and consequences, the children are encouraged to self-evaluate their weekly performance in following the rules. The family members are provided with the opportunity to give non-critical feedback in the form of support, encouragement, and confirmation to other family members.

The parents can log and rate the frequency and intensity of the targeted, more desirable behaviors. At the beginning of services, parents are asked to identify what desirable behaviors they would like to see their children using. A baseline of the

current rate of these targeted, desirable behaviors is documented. Response measures are taken at mid-treatment and end-treatment to compare this data with the initial baseline scores to see if there has been an increase in more effective behaviors being exhibited by the children.

### **U = Understanding the purpose of behavior.**

- Introduce the basic needs. Parents and children are educated on the source of their motivation by learning what Glasser (1998) describes as five innate needs: survival/self-preservation/health, love/belonging, power/achievement//recognition, freedom/independence/autonomy, and fun/enjoyment. They also learn about specific motivators called quality world pictures which are the pathways through which one learns to meet their needs. The reality therapist refers to the basic needs and quality world pictures to help the family discuss how they can more effectively balance their needs through the satisfying quality world pictures. According to Robert E. Wubbolding (2017), all behavior has the purpose to impact the world around us so that we perceive that our quality world pictures are being met, our needs are balanced, and to "send a message or signal to the rest of the environment" (p. 21). When families are better able to identify the purpose of their behaviors, they can manage them more effectively. Gaining awareness of the existence of these basic needs and the Quality World gives us tremendous power not only in understanding ourselves, but in understanding other people. We can see that some of the most bizarre behaviors are present because that is how someone has chosen to fulfill these needs through attempting to satisfy a quality world picture.
- Teach parents how to recognize different types of misbehavior. According to the principles of STEP, there are four types of misbehavior: attention-seeking, powering, revenge-seeking, and displaying helplessness or inadequacy. Parents are taught clues to identify the different types of misbehavior. For example, when parents are feeling discouraged while their children are misbehaving, the feelings of discouragement may be a clue that the children are displaying inadequacy or helplessness and our expecting the parents to either give-up or give-in to the misbehavior. To encourage more effective behavior, parents may provide encouragement to the children instead of giving up (Dinkmeyer, McKay, & Dinkmeyer, 1997).
- Understanding Parenting Styles and Child Temperament. Parents learn the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three major parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. They may also benefit from understanding how parent styles interact with child temperaments.

### **T = Teaching aspects of Choice Theory.**

Although Choice Theory is a comprehensive explanation of human behavior, it is simplistic enough that most people can grasp its major concepts. Of course, how the information will be taught needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, most people can grasp the concepts of basic needs, quality world pictures, and total behaviors.

- Basic needs/quality world pictures are explained in greater details. Peterson (2008) created a needs assessment designed to create a graphic illustration of perceived need fulfillment and intensity. The family therapist may use Pete's Pathogram to help the family members recognize the intensity levels of each of their basic needs, evaluate how effectively they are fulfilling their needs, and the amount of effort being invested into meeting each need area. Family members will learn how sharing the same five basic needs (survival, belonging, power, freedom, and fun) is something they have in common with each other but, at the same time, each family member has a unique quality world because each of them will have different ways of fulfilling these five needs. The reality therapist emphasizes the importance of having alternative quality world pictures in order to increase flexibility with fulfilling needs within the family system.
- Understanding the importance of being able to prioritize quality world pictures is of vital importance in working with families, especially those with histories of violence or substance abuse. Frequently, families with such histories may have inconsistencies in parenting methods which can lead to the children having a high degree of ambiguity in their quality world pictures. Such ambiguity poses a major obstacle with the children who are learning decision-making skills because they have more trouble prioritizing quality world pictures.
- The role of perception/behavioral system: Most parents believe that their children's misbehavior stems from mental health disorders, unconscious unresolved conflicts, or from some external stimuli. With learning Choice Theory, parents begin to understand that their stress is activated when there are perceptual differences between what they want (quality world pictures) and what they perceive they are getting from the outside world. They also learn how human beings usually resort to organized behaviors to reduce these perceptual differences until they recognize that these chosen behaviors are no longer as effective as they would like. It is at this time human beings utilize creativity in attempting new ways of reducing the perceptual differences between what they want and what they have.
- Total behavior: One of the concepts that separates Choice Theory from other theories of human behavior is the concept of total behavior which is comprised of activity, thinking, feeling, and physiology. As parents and children gain awareness of their own total behaviors, they gain more effective control over them. The understanding that total behavior originates within oneself helps each family member assume more responsibility for his/her behavior instead of blaming other people, genetics, or past unresolved conflicts.
- External World: Although the outside world is the thing over which they have the least control, it is this external world that family members tend to spend the most time and effort working to change. One of the messages that family members frequently send is: "If only someone else would change, my life would be better." Even though there may be ample evidence to support such a statement, this external focus diverts the attention of family members from other elements which are more controllable, such as total behaviors, perceptions, and quality world pictures.

## **C = Conversations/Communication**

With this component, the reality therapist teaches the family four simple questions they can ask themselves to enhance decision-making and therapeutic conversations. They also learn that they can use these questions to help each other.

- **WDEP System:** Wubbolding (2017) uses the acronym WDEP to assist with helping to recall four basic questions: W = What do you want? D = What are you Doing to get what you want? E = Evaluating if what you are doing is working? P = Planning by asking what can you do differently next time? Carleen Glasser (1996) has adapted this WDEP acronym for children by substituting the "E" with an "H" to make it a little easier for children to remember to ask, "Is what I am doing Helping or Hurting?" In addition to a self-help and problem-solving method, the WDEP System can be used to intervene in managing disruptive behavior. For example, questions like "What are you doing?" can be so much more productive in helping a child become more aware of his actions than asking less effective questions such as, "Why are you fighting?" As parents begin to use WDEP types of questions, they become more effective in decision-making, communication, and building relationships with their children. Additionally, as the children witness their parents using this type of questioning, the children are more likely to start copying this kind of productive questioning. If our children can copy all of the negative things we do, they can also learn from the positive things they see from us.
- **The Language of Choice Theory.** The language of external control psychology is filled with words such as, "have to", "must", "should", and "the way it is". These words indicate perceptual differences between what we want and what we have which only serves to increase the intensity of unwanted feelings. By simply substituting such words like "choose" and "prefer", we become more conscious of the choices we possess which helps us feel more in control and reduce unnecessary stress.
- **Using "I" messages.** Another effective way of improving our communication is replacing statements that begin with "You" and replace them with "I" or "We". Statements that begin with the word "you" oftentimes communicates shifting the blame to someone else. These types of messages can instigate and perpetuate arguments. "I" statements usually communicate the acceptance of one's responsibility for that individual's wants, perceptions, actions, thoughts, and feelings. "We" statements can be helpful in resolving conflicts because this word indicates that the speaker is aware of the importance of relationships (Dinkmeyer, D.: McKay, G., & Dinkmeyer, D., Jr., 1997).

**H = Habits of Relationships:** According to William Glasser (1998), most long-term psychological problems are the result of problematic relationships. Unlike other therapy approaches which are based on external control psychology, a Choice Theory based approach does not encourage family members to use behavior modification in attempt to control or manipulate each other. Instead, a Choice Theory approach will focus on strengthening relationships within the family that will likely result in diminished identified problematic behaviors often categorized in the Diagnostic and

Statistics Manual. The idea of strengthening relationships is quite consistent with STEP. Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) believed that children act out because they are discouraged and lack a sense of belonging.

The reality therapist attempts to model and teach what Dr. Glasser (Glasser & Glasser, 2000) calls the seven caring habits (supporting, accepting, trusting, encouraging, respecting, negotiating, and listening) while at the same time avoiding what Glasser refers to as the seven deadly habits of relationships (criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rewarding to control). Through the practice of the caring habits, parents learn to strengthen their relationships with their children and foster more cooperation with the children. Reality therapy provides parents with strategies to build relationships with their children rather relying on external control techniques (punishing and rewarding) to control their children's behavior. This relationship-focused approach is consistent with Dr. Glasser's idea that most long-term psychological problems are relationship issues.

E = Evaluation: Since the procedure of evaluation is such a central part of Reality Therapy, evaluation is an essential component to this integrated STEP and Reality Therapy approach.

- **Facilitating Family Meetings.** Since parent-child relationships are so influential in other relationships, this is an emphasis of the family meetings. Individual meetings with family members may be necessary to identify unsatisfied quality world pictures that need to be addressed in order for more effective family communication to take place. The counselor serves as a collaborator with each of the family members to help improve the functioning of the family system rather than siding with individual family members to try to determine who is to blame for what is going wrong. Autonomy is a primary need of focus because the counselor's goal is for family members to eventually function on their own without the assistance of the counselor. Eventually, the family members begin conducting their own family meetings. The parent(s), and eventually the children, will be involved in leading the family meetings. Ideally, family members will rotate in leading the meetings. The scores of the targeted behaviors are determined by the evaluations of the family members. The children are encouraged to practice self-evaluation because it is a great way of teaching children responsibility, as well as the importance of living according to one's own values. One frequent occurrence during the family meetings is the apparent discomfort that many of the young people have when self-evaluating their behavior. These discomfort times become the catalyst for positive changes in the child's behavior.
- **Implement the Mirror Technique and emphasize the ultimate question.** Family members are instructed to ask not what others can do to meet their needs. Instead, they are encouraged to ask what they can do, in a relationship with others, to meet their needs. Techniques such as Glasser's Solving Circle can be helpful in shifting family gripe sessions into a more productive discussion. Family members are encouraged to self-evaluate the impact of their behaviors on the relationships with the important people in their lives when they are asked to look in the metaphorical mirror and ask:

"Is what I'm doing bringing me closer to my loved ones or is it pushing them away?"

#### C = Consequences

- Natural: Some of the best lessons in life are learned as we are given the opportunity to experience the natural consequences of our choices. When parents protect their children from the natural results of their choices, the children may learn, "Someone will bail me out if I mess up." By allowing natural consequences to occur, children will be more likely to gain the necessary information and experiences to develop better assessment skills in order to effectively self-evaluate.
- Logical: There are times when simply allowing consequences is not recommended, such as when safety issues are involved. In these instances, some external controls may need to be in place. However, to avoid being punitive, these logical consequences need to be time-limited, related to teaching a more positive behavior, agreed upon in advance with the child/youth, and something that will be withdrawn as soon as more responsible behavior is being demonstrated. The stronger the connection parents have with their children, the less likely logical consequences will be needed. This is why utilization of the caring habits and the process of Reality Therapy is so key. Overuse of logical consequences can create disconnections in the parent-child relationship and thus should be used as little as possible.

#### K = Kudos to the Family

- Administer the Caring Habits Parenting Survey Post-Response Measure
- Celebrate successes regardless of how small. Each of us has a need for power/recognition. However, we live in a world that does not always or often give us what we want. As human beings, we are more aware of when our needs are not met as opposed to being met. This is why it is important to take special measures to recognize our successes and accomplishments.
- Summarize progress and identify unfinished business. In addition to summarizing successes, this component includes a time to assess treatment outcome measures that were either partially or completely unmet. Often families may have some feelings of sadness that sessions are coming to an end. It is not uncommon for the families to express some regret over not having invested more effort into achieving their goals. This assessment can be a nice segue to the final component which is carrying the learning further.
- Develop a future map to carry the learning further. The final component involves the family setting goals to continue progress following treatment. The therapist assists the family in setting goals to continue learning. Part of the therapist's role may be to make referrals to other service providers as part of the transition plan. Some of these referrals might include recommendations for wrap-around services, mentoring programs, support groups, etc.



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# Utilization of Reality Therapy and Choice Theory to Promote Career Development with Adolescents in School Settings

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## Abstract

The role of a Professional School Counselor encompasses supporting students in a variety of areas, including post-secondary and career considerations. Reality Therapy/Choice Theory is an extremely helpful lens from which school counselors can help students in making career decisions. **This article focuses on the intersection of how the ASCA National Model and Reality Therapy/Choice Theory can be applied in school settings.** This is modeled by providing a role play demonstration and discussion explaining how a professional school counselor can assist a student through career options and choices.

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## The ASCA National Model

Professional School Counselors play an important and vital role in helping all students in their academic, personal/social and career needs and challenges. School counselors are certified and/or licensed educators who hold, at a minimum, a master's degree in school counseling. School counselors play a vital role in enhancing students' futures and chances of success in their schools. School counselors use data to make informed decisions on which the student body needs support and spend time advocating for their students in individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings. They address the academic, career, and personal/social/emotional development of all students and do so through implementing a comprehensive school counseling program which consists of the following components in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National framework: **define, manage, deliver, and assess** (ASCA, 2019). Each of the four components has its own sections that help to give it more focus. The define component focuses on student standards and professional standards, including ethics and competencies (ASCA, 2019). The manage component has a program focus, including mission and vision statements, and program planning with various parts. The delivery component focuses on direct and indirect services as well as appropriate and inappropriate tasks assigned to school counselors. The assess component explains why it is important to assess a comprehensive school counseling program and how the assessment can be done (ASCA, 2019).

ASCA is a worldwide nonprofit organization that "supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so that they not only achieve success in school but are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society" (ASCA, 2019). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model for School Counseling (ASCA, 2019) identifies career development as an essential element in effective school counseling programs (Dimmitt & Carey, 2007). Most recent standards are ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2019) which are organized into three domains: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As ASCA calls for school counselors to promote the career development of all students (ASCA, 2019), there is a wealth of literature regarding college-career readiness and prepping students for their postsecondary planning (Curry & Milsom, 2017; Hines et al., 2019).

## **Reality Therapy/Choice Theory**

Reality Therapy is a counseling model that was introduced by Dr. William Glasser in 1965 (Can & Robey, 2021). Since then, the practice of Reality Therapy has continued to evolve to include Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998). Counselors need to have a firm grasp on both perspectives to be able to best serve their clients (Glasser, 2001). Reality Therapy/Choice Theory (RT/CT) focuses on goal-directed behavior and encourages clients to actively engage in their well-being (Barker, 2021). RT/CT is both a system and a method that seeks to provide a framework for overall mental health and wellness.

RT/CT has several important tenets that support clients, including two worldview constructs in describing how individuals navigate the world, the concepts of the Perceived World and Quality World (Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2015). The Perceived World consists of everything the individual knows or has experienced. The Quality World consists of the individual's expectations, values, and needs. Glasser (1998) noted that when these worlds are congruent, individuals are generally content. It is when their worlds are not congruent that the individual may become frustrated and therefore their behavior is affected.

Glasser (1998) proposed that all people are motivated by five basic needs, which include survival, love & belonging, fun, freedom, and power. Our Quality World pictures include specific people, places, things, values, and experiences that meet one or more of our basic needs and are unique to each individual (Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2015). We attempt to get our needs met through what Glasser referred to as Total Behavior, which includes a person's actions, thoughts, feelings, and physiological responses. All behavior is purposeful, to act on the world, to get what we want, which will satisfy one or more of our basic needs (Glasser, 1998). This behavior is goal-oriented and needs-based and can be positive or negative based on the behavior and setting.

## **Reality Therapy/Choice Theory in Schools**

Reality Therapy/Choice Theory can be helpful in schools for a variety of reasons (Barker, 2021; Hale, 2022; Lopez & Robey, 2022; Davis & Gomez Torres, 2022; Davis et al., 2015). Students often are reprimanded or punished due to negative behaviors that could be addressed differently using the RT/CT approach (Barker, 2021). School counselors specifically can support other faculty and staff to have a better understanding and to apply the RT/CT approach to make positive changes in student behaviors in the school building overall (Hale, 2022). School counselors also do not have a great deal of time for individual counseling due to the restrictions of the school bell schedule, and therefore, utilizing RT/CT's brief and direct therapeutic approach has been shown to be beneficial (Can & Robey, 2021).

## **Role Play Demonstration**

As part of the ASCA directive to address the academic, career, and personal/social/emotional development of all students, the delivery component focuses on offering services for students that help them identify and plan for their educational and vocational development. The use of RT/CT in this process can help students develop ideal (Quality world) pictures of what they see as their career directions and to develop plans for how to move forward to attain their goals. Following is a role play demonstration which illustrates how a school counselor can use the RT/CT model to help guide a student (Robin) in making the best choice for her post-high school career and educational plans.

Counselor: Hi Robin, thank you for coming in today. Can you talk to me a little bit about what brings you in today?

Client: Well...I'm so confused about where I'm supposed to be going what I am supposed to be doing right now. The last time we met, you talked a little bit about going to college and career and you gave me some brochures, but ever since then I've been wondering about my purpose and my direction. I don't even feel like I have a starting point right now.

Counselor: Yes, that makes a lot of sense. I think it can be overwhelming to make such a decision such a large decision in your life of what you're going to do after you graduate from high school. Do you feel like you have thought through what sort of work you might want to do?

*Using a Choice Theory lens in working with students, the counselor knows that Robin has quality world pictures of what she hopes for her life. These pictures may be congruent or in conflict with one another. Robin's confusion is in the conflict of these pictures, and her total behavior of confusion is an organized behavior that serves a purpose of motivating her to look for counseling. The first component of counseling with Choice Theory and Reality Therapy is to develop a relationship with the student. With this in mind, the counselor empathizes with Robin's struggle and helps Robin explore quality world pictures that might provide a clue for future career direction.*

Client: Well, that's part of my struggle. I always thought that maybe I would be a teacher, but it seems like that's kind of the default for girls; you know, to be a teacher or a nurse or something like that. The other thing that I like to do is something related to art. I like art, I like to work with my hands. There's a craft store in the neighborhood that does a lot of those things and I've thought I would like to run a store like that. You could see how that's kind of like teaching but in a different direction. In that case I wonder what I would need to do if I want to have a store. What would I need to know about business? What does that mean in terms of my next steps? I don't want to go to college and spend all that time and money and then find out that's not what I want to do. I am worried about that.

Counselor: That's a very common concern and I definitely hear you. I can empathize with the fact that you are a little confused and a little concerned about making some of those choices. I think as a junior you have the opportunity to think those things through at this time. Have you thought about what you really like about teaching, and what you really like about art? Maybe some of those things can come together. What are the qualities of those jobs that are important to you?

*The counselor explores Robin's interests in an attempt to identify specifically what pictures she has in her quality world that might lead to a clearer direction for her career preparation.*

Client: Well, it's interesting, because when I think about being a teacher nothing really specific comes to mind other than that's what I always thought I'd be. but when I think about doing something related to art and creativity, I realize that's what I love to do. When I get out the oils or the pastels or whatever I want to use, I feel like I'm starting from a blank slate and being really creative about what I'm doing. That energizes me I can just feel it as I'm talking to you.

Counselor: You're really feeling passionate about art. I think that teaching is just one of those things that you thought you might need to do but it seems like the passion for art is maybe where you want to go.

*The counselor recognizes the emotional energy that comes when people talk about their ideal pictures and begins to explore that further with Robin.*

Client: Yeah, that's really true. I told my parents I'd like to do something with art, and I even said I'd like to have my own business but then they said, well it's very hard to be successful in business, you should have a backup plan like be a teacher because you can always get a job as a teacher. I understand that I can have a degree as a teacher and specialize in art, but even here at our school we only have one art teacher and so it doesn't seem like there's a lot of opportunities for art.

Counselor: What's been helpful for you in making these sorts of decisions in the past?

*The counselor explores past successes to encourage Robin in recognizing that she has the skills she needs to come to a decision.*

Client: That's a good question. My first answer, which is just kind of like a joke, is that I just flip a coin. In the past the decisions haven't seemed so huge. This feels so heavy, like a big commitment. I guess I am thinking about what's been helpful really is coming to talk to somebody like you and maybe help me figure out the pros and cons of each one, or maybe some way that we can work fit them together.

Counselor: I really appreciate you mentioning that you like coming to me and talking these things out, and you also mentioned your parents. Can you tell me a little bit about your support system and the people around you that are helping you make these very difficult decisions?

*The counselor helps Robin identify other areas of support in making decisions.*

Client: Well, my parents are really wonderful people and I know that they want what's in my best interest. Neither one of them has gone to college so they want me to further my education, probably so I can do some things that they always wanted to do. They want what's best for me. I think the challenge is that they don't really know how to advise me because they don't have the background themselves.

Counselor: Yes, I think that makes a lot of sense. So being able to have conversations with someone like me is helpful for you. I'm wondering if you have ever done a pro and con list regarding your career direction,

*The counselor explores Robin's current behavior related to making a decision.*

Client: That's a good idea. How would I start with something like that? I mean, really just list pros and cons?

Counselor: Yes, I think that's something that you can do. It will help you think about what you really feel passionate about, what you really enjoy doing. We can then talk about your list and discuss what sounds workable and what challenges you might face.

*The counselor works with Robin to develop a plan of action.*

Client: I think one of the biggest worries I have is about money related to going to college. You know, I would need scholarships or student loans or something like that and getting them feels scary too.

Counselor: Absolutely, so we will definitely work together to fill out a FAFSA application for financial aid. There's a lot of information about scholarships, depending on the university

that you attend, and then ultimately depending on a major that you choose. There are scholarships for almost everything that you can think of. We can work together to apply for those scholarships. We will be doing that here at the end of your junior year and into your senior year as well.

*The counselor addresses Robin's concerns about money that is potentially distracting Robin from thinking clearly about what direction she wants to take. This removes a barrier to Robin's creative exploration of her career direction.*

Client: I appreciate that because I honestly don't know where to start. The pros and cons list is a good idea. Is that something we do now, or do you want me to do that before our next appointment? How do I get rolling with this?

Counselor: With the short amount of time that we have together it might be hard for us to work through that pro and con list together. I would like you to start between now and next week when we have our next counseling session together, and then we can review it and see what you are thinking. So in that pro and con list just make sure that you are organically listing everything that sounds wonderful to you and then list some of the concerns that you have. In our next session we can talk through each of those concerns and the passions as well. I'm very interested right now to have you truly and passionately focus on what you want to do and then we'll discuss the concerns along the way in helping you make that decision. Do you feel like you're comfortable working on that list over the next week?

*The counselor works with Robin to develop specific steps for taking action and continues to offer support as Robin goes through the process.*

Client: Yes! In fact, I went to Mrs. Nelson, the art teacher, and asked to make an appointment for next week.

Counselor: That's a really good idea! Mrs. Nelson has a career that is focused on both of those things that you might potentially be interested in. I think it makes a lot of sense for you to talk to an art teacher. You mentioned the store that you like. I'm wondering if it might be a good idea for you to talk to the owner of the store and just ask some questions to find out how they got into the business. How do you feel hearing these suggestions?

*The counselor checks Robin's emotional response to this plan to gauge her level of interest and commitment to the plan.*

Client: That's a good idea! I love going in that store and they know me there because I'm in there a lot. So, they probably wouldn't mind talking to me. It sounds exciting to me to do those things.

Counselor: Good! I'm really glad that you are taking steps that will help you in narrowing down your decision. I'm hoping that after you talk to a couple of different people about these careers, and then focus on your own passions and write that pro and con list, you'll be able to ultimately make a decision that is best for you.

*The counselor summarizes the steps of the plan and links the plan to how it will help Robin meet her goal.*

Client: Thanks, I feel a lot more settled than when I came in that's for sure.

Counselor: Oh good! Robin, I'm glad that we were able to talk a little bit about some of these areas of interest for you. We talked through a couple of next steps so let's formalize your plan. Can you tell me a little bit about how you are going to get these things accomplished?

*The counselor goes over the plan to be sure Robin is in agreement and knows exactly what she wants to do.*

Client: I'm going to start making the pro's and con's list. I'm going to do that when I get home today and then I'm going to contact the art teacher, Ms. Nelson, and ask to make an appointment to talk to her. Then I'm going to go to the art store on Thursday. That's 10% off day so I think I can go in there and maybe get some fun stuff and then talk to the owner while I'm there or make an appointment to talk to her because she might be busy. She'll probably like that so that'll be fun. I can do both of those next week.

Counselor: Good, I think that's a concrete plan. I'm excited to hear that you're really looking forward to making that pros and cons list and then talking to the art teacher soon. I think that's wonderful! I think when we meet again for our next appointment, I'm going to focus on what it was like to complete that pro and con list, and if you've been able to have those interviews and what that was like.

*The counselor encourages Robin and makes a follow-up plan to meet.*

Client: OK thanks I feel much better than when I came in.

Counselor: I'm glad to hear it.

Client: I look forward to seeing you next time.

Counselor: Me too.

### **Follow-up Session:**

Counselor: Hi Robin, it is nice to see you again. How are you?

Client: I'm good. I brought this project to show you. When I was at the art store, I made this little necklace, see I'm wearing it now, look how cool it is!

Counselor: Oh my gosh! That's beautiful. I love that! I'm excited to hear about your pro and con list and your interviews. It sounds like you've made a little bit of progress, so tell me a little more about it.

Client: Look at my list! First of all, it's just a lot of things, mostly on the art side, but it was really interesting to me because when I started thinking about being an art teacher then I started to have more things on the teaching side. It got me thinking about how maybe it would be a good idea to look at colleges now where I could learn and work on my art but then also learn how to use it as a teacher. I realized that it's not just being a teacher at an elementary school, I could be a teacher at a university or any place. The woman at the arts store said that she went to Community College. So, I was thinking I could even start there and get some of my general education classes finished and then take some art classes and then that might save me some money too.

Counselor: Wow! I'm impressed at all the progress that you've made with your pro and con list and talking to our art teacher and the business owner. I really like the way that you're thinking, so I think it could make sense for us to start looking at universities that might have these majors that you're interested in. How does that feel for you?

Client: That feels good. Also, I'd like to look at the community colleges because then I could stay at home for a while and maybe save some money and then go away to school. But if I get scholarships that would take me away to school, that would be OK too. It's interesting because now there's more things to think about but I definitely feel like this is the right direction for me.

Counselor: Yes, you seem much more excited and confident. I feel like you've done your research and you are very focused now, and I see that calmness kind of settling over you compared to the last time that we met when you seemed much more anxious and confused. That's very nice to see. I think it would make sense for us to create a list of multiple options, including community colleges and universities that are in state or out of state and then think through the finances as the next piece to this making this decision for you. I understand financially that's a difficult decision to make as well.

Client: That sounds good to me so can we look at that next time we meet?

Counselor: Absolutely, I'll send you the information via e-mail and you can start to look at it and then when we meet next time you can tell me if you were able to find specific information about school programs that you're interested in. Then we can begin to narrow down that list to help you feel even more comfortable with the planning and the next steps of your post-secondary process.

Client: Thanks! I really appreciate your help.

Counselor: Of course, I appreciate talking to you, Robin. Have a good day.

## **Summary**

This is an example of how school counselors can use Reality Therapy/Choice Theory to support students in making decisions about their careers. This demonstration presents two meetings between a professional school counselor and her student. The student is having difficulties in making decisions around the many choices that she should consider regarding her post-secondary options. For counselors working with adolescents in schools, this is a very common issue. Adolescents can feel overwhelmed with making such an important decision in their life. This two-meeting demonstration is an example of how a counselor can use Reality Therapy/Choice Theory to assist the student through this challenge. The school counselor focuses on exploring the student's quality world and how she pictures that world in her future. As the counselor discusses this with the student, the counselor focuses on the student's current behavior, support system, and existing barriers. The counselor also emphasizes creating a plan of action with the student and is sure to follow up and discuss the progress being made with the plan they worked on together.

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### **Brief Bios--**

Yenitza Z. Guzman, Ph.D, LPC, NCC, PEL is a clinical assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. She earned her Ph.D in Counselor Education and Supervision from Governors State University in August 2022. She received her Master of Arts in School Counseling from Governors State University and her Bachelor of Arts in Teaching of English from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Guzman has over a decade of clinical experience working with youth in Chicago Public Schools. She also has experience teaching a variety of graduate courses in both the school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs. Her

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Ahmet Can, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling at Governors State University and is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the state of Illinois. He is also the track leader in the School Counseling specialization at GSU. Dr. Can has worked as a school, college, mental health counselor, clinical supervisor and counselor educator in a variety of settings including a primary, middle, and high school, college counseling center, private practice, and higher education. Dr. Can's major research and scholarship areas of interest include counselor education and supervision, school counseling, cross cultural counseling, international college students and psychological well-being. He is an active member in several professional organizations including the American Counseling Association (ACA), Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), Illinois Counseling Association (ICA), and Illinois School Counseling Association (ISCA).

Patricia A. Robey, Ed.D., LPC, CTRTC, is a full professor in the Division of Psychology and Counseling at Governors State University. She is also a Licensed Professional Counselor and a senior faculty member and trainer for Glasser Institute for Choice Theory – US and William Glasser International. Pat has authored and co-authored numerous articles and book chapters on applications of choice theory and reality therapy and is lead editor of the book *Contemporary Issues in Couples Counseling: A Choice theory and Reality Therapy Approach*.