

Changing Thought and Changing Behavior

I haven't liked watching infomercials, or talk shows, where a guru tries to get us to believe that we can change our behavior with just a change in thought. I don't like reading self-help books that claim the same thing. However, I also can't deny that I keep seeing it in action. People do change — sometimes in an instant.

I'm becoming more of a “cognitive behavior” style therapist because I can't deny what I keep seeing and I am slowly beginning to embrace how easy behavior change can be just by changing a thought (hey, there's potential for change, even in an old dog like me).

Many people believe they are the victims of consequences, or situations, or of their own unconsciousness. I think Sigmund Freud did us a great disservice implying that we are driven by forces (unconscious) that we cannot see. I continue to see clients change their lives in miraculous ways simply by choosing to do so. I see people who have fought with regular exercise, weight loss, drinking, relationships, communication, employment, etc. who, one day, come to terms with how behavior is a choice and that we are not controlled by hidden factors. We can, at any moment, just decide to change our diet forever, or give up caffeine — forever. We can change anything if we really want to.

In graduate school I watched my professor, Fred Moore, E.D., intervene in people's thoughts many times. A student would be complaining about a struggle and then imply that they couldn't figure out why they would be sabotaging themselves or be unable to change something. Fred would say, “Oh, so you do blah, blah, blah... Well, that must make some sense...” The student would say, “Huh?” Fred would say, “Oh, I mean you must have a good reason for doing that (behavior).” It was so disarming and effective that I use it a lot.

For a phrase like that to work though, you have to be totally honest with yourself — not lie to yourself, dig down deep and ask, “Why would I do that? I ate a whole bag of chips because...?”

If you look thoroughly, you will eventually find an answer. Once you have it, then you are “awake” and at choice and not driven by some “unconscious” reason. And then you can change your behavior in an instant, just like the gurus keep saying. Your mind is powerful, but you must know the right questions to ask...

Courtesy of:



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