

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNER PICTURE ALBUM

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It is a fundamental principle in Reality Therapy that human beings are internally motivated by basic human needs. Glasser (1965) identified love and self-worth as basic motivations of human behavior. These internal drives lead to behavior which results in a success identity or a failure identity (Glasser, 1972). More recently the basic motivators of human behavior have been described as: Belonging, Power (Recognition, etc.), Fun, and Freedom (Glasser, 1981, 1984).

As Glasser frequently states, human beings do not fulfill their needs directly, but rather they are met through the inner world of wants (the picture album), the behavioral system which maneuvers the world, and the perceptual system (sensory camera) which filters the images of the world.

In the practical application of Reality Therapy, it is essential to explore the client's picture album since it is the more proximate source of all motivation and affects human behavior. Similarly, in teaching Control Theory, it is useful to teach the characteristics of the album as a refinement of the component of step I "What do you want?" It is then easier for the practitioner of Reality Therapy to incorporate Control Theory into the Steps of Reality Therapy.

Described below are nine characteristics of the inner picture album or world of wants. Some of these have been described by Glasser (1984). Others result from the observations of other practitioners of Reality Therapy.

1. All pictures are need-fulfilling.

Some people have the picture of sky-diving as an activity that provides fun. For others, sky-diving is the *last* activity which is seen as need fulfilling. But whatever pictures a person chooses to insert into the album, he/she does this because the picture (want, desire) satisfies a need in some way.

2. Pictures are related to each sense.

We have wants related to touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. For instance, in the play *Amadeus* (1978), the jealous and vicious Salieri has a high need for power. At first, he sees his own mediocre musical compositions as superior to those of Mozart. When he listens to his own music he hears a beautiful melody because it is need fulfilling. His desire is that others, especially the king, possess similar picture albums so that his own power, status, influence and fame would be enhanced.

Likewise, in the picture album are wants related to tastes that are sweet, smells that are fragrant, and tactile "wants" related to surfaces that are warm and soft, etc.

3. Pictures are removable.

Since a picture is synonymous with a "want", it is not the same as a memory which, though removable, is more difficult to extinguish than wants. It is not an uncommon experience, for instance, to have had a relationship and to have removed the person from the album while retaining the memory. The person is thus remembered but is not regarded as desired or need fulfilling. In other words, the picture, not the memory, has been removed from the album. Consequently, it is clear that pictures are changeable. In fact, one of the goals of counseling with some clients is to help them change their wants. This is, of course, in many cases, not an easy task to accomplish. They can be asked, however, if they wish to remove the picture, "put it in the back of the album" as Glasser frequently says, or even remove it completely and "bury it in the backyard".

4. Some pictures are realistic and some are unrealistic.

Frequently adolescent clients have a burning desire to "get my parents off my back." A parent sometimes wishes the child would "act the way he did before he became a teenager." A spouse often seeks to remake the partner according to his/her own pictures. These "unrealistic" or unattainable wants are not abnormal or unhealthy, and so experienced counselors do not reject, out of hand, the unrealistic pictures of the client. Rather they recognize that everyone has at least some unrealistic wants. With odds 5 million to 1, even Reality Therapists buy lottery tickets.

Consequently, the client is helped through the skillful use of the third step of Reality Therapy to evaluate whether all of, part of, or none of the pictures can be fulfilled.

5. Pictures are specific and unique.

We want to wear specific clothes, eat a specific food, relate to specific people, achieve in a specific way on the job, enjoy life in ways that are unique to each of us. Needs are general motivators and are common to all human beings. But picture albums differ. Witness, for example, the wide variety of clothes worn by people in an airport, or shopping center. Rarely does anyone wear the exact same outfit as someone else. Obviously, no two people in the world have the exact same album. And yet there is commonality among picture albums. Society is able to function because of common wants.

6. Pictures can be blurred.

Because pictures are specific, it should not be concluded that they are always clear and precise. Some people have not defined all of their pictures. This is evident from the results of interest inventories given to junior high school students. Frequently, their interests are vague and imprecise. They often define their pictures about careers and other interests as they move into and/or through secondary school.

Another example illustrates this point. A shopper goes to the shopping center. The desire is for shoes, not for an automobile, a boat, or a raincoat. The precise picture of *this* or *that* pair of shoes is not yet defined. It becomes clear only after trying on a few pairs of shoes, i.e. after "behaving" in relation to the shoes and "perceiving" them. Thus a clarity-

continuum of pictures can be identified: from "crystal clear" to "very blurred."

7. Pictures exist in priority.

Some wants are more important than others. At meal time, a person wants food. But to eat peas rather than carrots might be a low priority. It is helpful to consciously determine whether a want is a "burning desire" or a "weak whim." Part of the first step of Reality Therapy is to help the client sort out the pictures in the album and to put them in categories of "burning desire", "strong desire", "moderately desired", or "weak whim".

8. Pictures can be in conflict with one another.

To want a fish dinner excludes a meat dinner unless, of course, a compromise can be worked out. Yet many people agonize over even such a simple decision to the point of asking the waitress to decide for them. Similarly, new pictures can conflict with old ones. Because of this phenomenon, people are motivated to mold the external world to match their ever changing inner world. Thus they change jobs, buy new clothes, form new relations, etc.

9. Pictures can be in conflict with the pictures of other people.

Having one's own conflicting pictures is relatively minor compared with the implications of the conflict between the pictures of one person and the pictures of another person, group, race, culture, and nation. The divergence and conflict among billions of picture albums makes life interesting, exciting, thrilling, as well as painful, threatening, and dangerous. Horse races exist because one person wants "Fleet Feet" to win and another bets on "Fast Lass". Many want to merely watch others sky-dive and find it exciting to watch sky-divers fulfill their intense desire for the real thing. Groups, cultures, and nations are formed because of commonality in wants. They even impose their wants on other groups, cultures, and nations. To remove conflict from among picture albums would be to remove most of the pages from the history books.

The importance of the picture album in practicing Reality Therapy and teaching Control Theory can hardly be overemphasized. In addition to the general needs, the picture album and the frustrations, (the gaps between what we have and what we want at a given moment) are the sources of all human motivation. Because of wants, we generate the billions of behaviors that occur each day on the planet Earth. It is the problems and decisions originating in human picture albums that are the *raison d'être* of counselors and the counseling profession. It is thus evident that if therapists are to help their clients live more effectively, they must help them sort out and define in precise ways this exciting inner world which, linked to the need system, is the source of all human motivation.

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