

Synopsis of First Chapter of Book "Me and You - A Primer for Establishing and Maintaining Emotionally Intimate Relationships"

Prepare yourself to read this book as a student taking a course describing the principles governing human behavior, for that is what you will be doing if you read it. We will present principles which have been tested in a formal behavioral laboratory in a medical school psychiatric inpatient setting and in multiple mobile mental behavioral health labs (those of the authors and of the plethora of patients with whom we have worked). Each person who entrusted their personal growth to us was taught that they had a behavioral laboratory in their mind which needed to be awakened and used. They almost all found that if they routinely analyzed and changed their behavior in light of the input they received about it as it occurred, near unbelievable personal growth and relief from mental and emotional symptoms ensued.

Think of this. As I relate to you, I have a goal or goals (expectations) I would like to meet. [If I have no reason to encounter you, I won't attempt to relate to you. So, since I am relating, I have a reason and, therefore, a goal even though I may not be aware of it.] As you relate to me you may or may not be aware that you are giving me feedback about me, but you will always be giving me feedback - on a level which, most likely, is out of your awareness as well as mine. This corrective information tells me whether I am meeting my goal or falling short of it. As we relate to one another, I (and, of course, you, as well) will find myself feeling comfortable and at ease or strangely disquieted, maybe, even anxious. These feelings arise from the feedback your behavior provides me about me and how you see me, and of course the same thing happens to you as you sum up the behavioral signals I give to you. My (and of course, your) comfort or discomfort appears because we both have expectancies of which we are unaware which are unmet and cause the comforting or disconcerting feelings..

If I meet my goal while relating to you, my self concept of me as being a capable person who relates well with others is reinforced, not challenged. But if the total of your behavior informs me that your concept of me, is different from my ideas about me, my self- concept is challenged and that makes me feel anxious. Anxiety will occur anytime and every time my concept of myself is questioned. Therefore, if the impression of me you provide to me at any given moment is different from my concept of me, my self-concept is challenged and I will, accordingly, feel anxiety.

Anxiety is painful both emotionally and physically. If it is pronounced enough, I will not only feel the emotion of fear (almost always from an unknown cause) but, I will physically feel my pulse pounding in my head. I will feel myself breathing rapidly, my muscles will likely be tense, my blood pressure will be up, and my stomach will feel tight and uncomfortable. This is all the result of the "Fight-Flight" principle elaborated by Hans Selye many years ago, and will be further elucidated at the appropriate time in this book.

I probably won't realize it, but the moment that anxiety occurs is a time at which I am being presented with an excellent learning opportunity. If I am willing to feel the pain of the anxiety for a finite period of time, I can enter my mental behavioral lab, start asking myself questions about the encounter like "why do I feel anxious"? Then, I may ask, "What did I do wrong that engendered the disparate feedback". More importantly, I need to ask "What can I do different from here on which will give me positively reinforcing responses in situations like this"? If I ask the right questions about me, I will have set my self up for a period of personal growth, but,

remember, I had to allow myself to feel the pain in order to earn the opportunity. By having accepted the anxiety which your feedback induced and questioning myself about my behavior which engendered it, I have made one step toward growth.

But, if I refuse to evaluate myself, I still have to feel the pain or find some way of escaping it. Sigmund Freud elaborated a number of ways of avoiding anxiety which he called “defense mechanisms”. It seems he chose a good name, but he addressed the mechanisms arising from within individuals and gave little attention to those appearing from without - those which arise from the many occasions in which we relate in a non-constructive manner. These will be explored in the following chapters in depth. You will learn much about the defense mechanisms we all use to try to avoid the pain of the anxiety we have generated by behaving in a manner which evokes unpleasant information about ourselves from our environment (your feedback to Me).

For now, it's enough if you understand that if you avoid the pain you also avoid the growth. Undertaking personal growth requires that we feel some emotional pain, but it is also a most rewarding experience.. It is not just the cure, but, the way of, preventing a host of psychological or emotional problems which we induce upon ourselves by our behavior. Few of us are aware that we produce the majority of our emotional problems ourselves. That we produce most of our own anxieties is almost certainly the most important behavioral principle this approach offers. The totally empowering aspect of this realization is that if we cause them, we are in control of them, and we can fix them at any point we decide it is time to rid ourselves of them. Some of the many other principles you will learn as you continue to read include the following:

You will learn that feeling loveable as you grow up is taught by your parents. You will also be made to realize that if you do not feel that you are a loveable person (“I’m Okay”) you will constantly seek love’s substitute (approval from others) without knowing it, and this frequently will lead you to an eventual depressed state. (Don’t worry, you will be taught how not to become depressed as almost all of our previously depressed patients have accomplished). Further, you will find that you also are the principal cause of it, and if you cause it, you control it, and you can change it. You will gain the knowledge that emotions (feelings) are the language of intimacy and the only way to feel truly intimate is to share your feelings while you are feeling them. You will learn how to freely express your emotions and feel better about yourself for having done it.

These are some of the many things you can learn about yourself from this book, but I wanted to mention a few of them here and give you a chance to see what the course you are about to engage in is all about.

If you are willing to accept and feel the pain of anxiety, and spend the rest of your life feeling really good about the person you have become **without that pain**, then read on. Get on board and enjoy the ride. You will get off as a different person if you do the work which you find out you need to do.

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