

## Reality Therapy Chapter 11

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## William Glasser

- “. . . it is what you choose to do in a relationship, not what others choose to do, that is the heart of reality therapy



## Biography of William Glasser

- Born 1925 & educated at Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio).
- Initial training in chemical engineering, then master's in clinical psychology
- Attended UCLA medical school & became a board certified psychiatrist in 1961

## Biography of William Glasser

- Glasser's path a continuing progression from private practice to lecturing & writing, ultimately culminating in publication of 20+ books
- After writing counseling book, *Reality Therapy* (1965), published his first book on education, *Schools without Failure* (1969), greatly expanded understanding of motivation & behavior with *Choice Theory* (1998), & finally added, *Warning: Psychiatry Can Be Hazardous to Your Mental Health* (2003), to help people improve their mental health and happiness

## Philosophy of William Glasser

- People should not be labeled with mental illness unless they have a true brain disorder such as Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, head trauma & brain infections (they should all be treated by neurologists)
- Otherwise, categories of DSM-IV-TR are not mental disorders or illness
- Psychologists & psychiatrists should only use DSM categories to satisfy requirements of insurance companies to receive payments

## Philosophy of William Glasser

- People choose to be depressing, anxious, panicky, angering, behaving in a way that others say they have a psychosis, etc. in order to avoid other more painful experiences or to reach out for help
- They are coping in best way they know how for given situation, which is usually caused either by relationship problem or a lack of a relationship at all

## Philosophy of William Glasser

- The brain reacts to actions & thinking processes of individual, rather than individual reacting as result of an “imbalance in brain chemistry” as is popularly thought
- As a result, people do not need psychotropic or “brain” drugs such as Prozac
- Rather, they need psychotherapy to help them with their relationships
- Society should be in a more preventive mode rather than a reactive mode for psychological behaviors, just as communities are for medical illness

## Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Past 100 years, technology has progressed drastically, but human progress has been at a standstill
  - Still wars, divorces, suicides, murder, poor productivity in schools & workplace & unhappy people
- Two groups of people of unhappy people:
  - Those who try to find their way back to pleasurable relationships w/happy people
  - Those who have given up on relationships & try to feel good by other means (drugs, alcohol, violence, sex, abusing food, etc.)
    - Once this group can find meaningful relationships through AA or other professional or nonprofessional counselors & teachers, they too can find happiness again

## Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Glasser believes problem is external mindset of our society
  - “You must do what I want or be the way I want you to be!”
- Rather than letting us both decide what is best for us in our relationship & then work together to make it happen
- Glasser feels that society should move more towards internal locus of control

## Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Need to change our “7 Deadly Habits of External Control”
  - Criticizing
  - Blaming
  - Complaining Nagging
  - Threatening
  - Punishing
  - Bribing or rewarding to control
- To the “7 Caring Habits of Choice Theory)”
  - Respecting
  - Supporting
  - Encouraging Listening
  - Accepting
  - Trusting
  - Negotiating differences to a Win/Win situation

## Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- **Difficult to retrain our thinking & communication because we are so engrained in the external control system**
- **Three Beliefs of External Control Psychology:**
  - 1) My behavior is caused by something that occurs outside of myself (e.g., “I answer the phone because it rings”)
  - 2) I can make you do what I want you to do or we can control each other by what we say or do
  - 3) I know what’s right for you & if you don’t do it, I should & must control you because it is the right thing to do
- Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree  
**Where are you on this continuum of beliefs for #1, 2, & 3**

## Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- Similar idea as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Survival, Love/Belonging, Power, Freedom, & Fun)
  - Different in that only Survival & Love/Belonging are in both sets
  - Choice Theory needs are NOT in a hierarchy
- Rather they are analogous to the legs of a chair -- if all legs are balanced, the chair functions better
- Glasser believes that we are genetically programmed to satisfy all five basic needs
- Negotiation is necessary to balance the needs of both parties of a relationship
- One party may need more of one need than the other

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- There may also be an internal conflict to satisfy multiple needs at same time
  - e.g., you want to be responsible & gain respect of others but also want freedom & fun
- McNamara (1997) also added intraneed conflicts (e.g.,
  - "the need for survival can include the motivation to be safe & the urge toward growth")

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- **1) Survival - Physiological Need**
  - All living creatures struggle to survive & reproduce the species
  - Also, humans look beyond present survival needs & make an effort to live in ways that lead to longevity (exercise & eating healthy)
  - Survival comes from the "old brain" – base of the brain As humans developed, cerebral cortex or "new brain" allows us to have needs beyond survival
  - If survival was our only need, there would be no anorexia or suicide
  - Also getting along better with each other would result in more survival & less death

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- **2) Love & Belonging - Psychological Need**
  - It's a 2-way street
    - "I need to receive love, be involved & feel like I belong"
    - "I feel better if I am able to give love & acceptance to others"
  - Most of psychotherapy in countries where survival needs are primarily met revolve around this need
  - Either lack of love or deteriorating love are associated with
    - Suicide
    - Mental illness
    - Infidelity
    - Murder
    - Feelings of jealousy, abandonment, revenge & despair
  - External control is used extensively here

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- **3) Power – Psychological Need**
  - Distinctive human need
  - Includes feeling of accomplishment, success, recognition, respect & being heard
  - For some, the need is insatiable
  - For others, they are satisfied with the amount they have
  - For some, it comes at the expense of their relationships with others (greed, external control over others)
  - But for some, it may work for the common good (saving lives or developing new treatments)
  - We need to strive for the latter rather than the former

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- **4) Freedom to express ideas, choices & ability to be constructively creativity – Psychological Need**
  - It concerns us most when we perceive that our freedom is threatened
  - Need balance between "your need to try to force me to live my life the way you want & my need to be free of that force
  - This balance is best expressed by the golden rule "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"
  - External control is the enemy of freedom
  - When we loose freedom, we loose a defining human characteristic (creativity)

### **Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings**

- **5) Fun – Psychological Need**
  - The genetic reward for learning
  - We play all our lives & as a result we learn all our lives
  - "Fun is best defined by laughter"
  - "People who fall in love are learning a lot about each other, & they find themselves laughing almost continually"
  - "Laughing & learning are the foundation of all successful long-term relationships"

## Choice Theory (Quality World)

- As people grow up & interact with environment, they find some parts of world satisfy their needs & make them feel good & other parts do not
- They take this information & build into their memory pictures of people, things, beliefs or situations which seem to be the best ways to satisfy one or more of the basic needs
- The conglomerate of these wants is the world in which we would like to live & is called our **Quality World**

## Choice Theory (Quality World)

- It is dynamic as our experiences grow
- Anytime we feel good, we are choosing to behave so that something or someone in our real world comes close to matching the image in our quality world

## Choice Theory (Quality World)

- Everyone has their own unique quality world
- Total objectivity is a myth
- It could only exist if we all had exactly the same quality worlds
- It's just like jury trials – everyone sees things from a different perspective
- Only things that are not important to us can be seen as they truly are
- Luckily, there are enough of these unimportant things to almost all of us that we can agree that what is out there is **REALITY**

## Choice Theory (Quality World)

- Besides being in conflict with other's quality world wants, our own quality world wants can be in conflict with each other and/or they can be linked together
- Advertisers hope that consumers will put their product into their quality world & link them to the images the consumers already have in their minds (heroes, beauty, power, wealth, etc.)
- Pictures or wants exist in a priority & often it is the therapist's job to help clients to determine priorities about what is need satisfying in the long term & not just for the moment

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## Choice Theory (Total Behavior)

- Behavior generated to fulfill *quality world wants* is always composed of four elements: actions, thinking, feeling, & physiology
- All behaviors have all 4 components, so it is called **Total Behavior**
- Other psychotherapy theories emphasize one or two of these components whereas Reality Therapy emphasizes all four of them
- However, we only have direct control over two of them: Actions & Thinking

### **Reality Therapy (Characteristics)**

- Reality therapy focuses on what clients can control in a relationship, rather than finding fault or talking about what they can't control
- It is crucial for client to understand they can only control their own actions & behavior, & they can control all of them
- Reality therapists strive to be themselves in order to build relationships with client & teach them how to relate to others
- Therefore, transference is rejected in this therapy

### **Reality Therapy (Characteristics)**

- It is important to keep the therapy in the present & not dwell on the past
- Glasser admits that we are products of the past & the therapist can listen to past experiences briefly, but we are not victims of the past unless we choose to be
- Also, it is important not to focus on the symptoms because they are just the body's way of warning client that behavior they are choosing is not satisfying a basic need
- Glasser believes that if client believes therapist wants to hear symptoms or past, they will comply & result will be therapy that lasts longer than it needs to

### **Reality Therapy (Therapeutic Process)**

- Basic goal is to help clients learn better ways to fulfill all of their basic needs & connect with the people that they have chosen to put into their quality world
- If client has not voluntarily come to therapy, it is key for therapist to focus on connecting with client before doing anything else
- Often these clients have not had any positive relationships in past with adults (teachers, parents, school counselors, etc.)
- Therapist's role is not to judge or evaluate client but act as an advocate to help & support, as a teacher or mentor to client & to encourage them that there is hope

### **Family Therapy (Application: Therapeutic Techniques & Procedures)**

- Practice of reality therapy is conceptualized as the "cycle of counseling" consisting of two components:
  - 1) Creating the counseling environment
  - 2) Implementing specific procedures that lead to changes
- Cycle begins by establishing a working relationship with client & proceeds through an exploration of client wants, needs & perceptions

### **Family Therapy (Application: Therapeutic Techniques & Procedures)**

- Clients explore their total behavior & make their own self-evaluations
- If they decide to try a new behavior, they make plans & commit themselves to plan & there is a follow-up on how well client is doing
- Reality therapy is an art form, not just following procedures
- Each client is different with different needs

### **Reality Therapy From a Multicultural Perspective**

- It is essential that cross-cultural therapists respect differences between their own quality world & that of their clients
- Counselor can work with client to help them develop relationships as they are meaningful to them in their culture
- In some cultures, the procedures need to be modified such as not asking direct questions or accepting "I'll try" when asked to make plans with Japanese clients

### **Reality Therapy (Contributions)**

- It has a short-term focus
- Existentialism exist in the theory as well as cognitive-behaviorism
- There is no hidden agenda by the therapist, it is client focused
- Client is encouraged to decide if what they are doing is working or not

### **Reality Therapy (Limitations and Criticisms)**

- Corey believes that for some cultures, clients may be reluctant to voice their needs, & that discrimination & racism may impede clients from obtaining what they want in life
- The result would be that client may feel misunderstood
- Corey also believes that the psychoanalytic aspects of counseling (unconscious, dreams, transference & past childhood experiences) are not given adequate emphasis in influencing our behavior

### **Reality Therapy (Limitations and Criticisms)**

- Counselors need to ensure that their own values & need to give advise does not pervert the basic concepts of choice theory
- Many people disagree with Glasser that all psychological disorders are behavioral choices & there are no biochemical or genetic influences

### **Reality Therapy in Summary**

- Reality therapy is best characterized as a form of cognitive behavioral therapy
- In Reality Therapy:
  - Therapy is a didactic process
  - Clients must make commitments
  - Punishment is eliminated
  - Therapists do not accept excuses or blaming
- Goals:
  - Clients are taught Choice Theory
  - Clients are helped to get connected or reconnected with people they have chosen to put in their quality world
  - Assist clients in dealing with the present

### **Reality Therapy in Summary**

- Emphasis is on choice & responsibility
- Therapist establishes involvement with the client
- Focus is on client's strengths
- Planning & commitment are essential
- Methods of Reality Therapy:
  - Behavior-oriented methods
  - Contract method
  - Role-playing
  - Confrontation of client

### **Reality Therapy in Summary**

- Functions of Reality Therapists:
  - Setting limits in the therapeutic setting
  - Getting clients to be specific about how they will make desired changes
  - Confronting clients by not accepting their excuses
  - Helping clients reformulate their plans, if necessary
- Reality Therapists deal with the following:
  - What client is currently doing
  - What clients are thinking & feeling, when this relates to what they are doing
  - A client's relationships with significant others
  - Assisting clients in developing an action plan geared for change