



Mountains Into Molehills

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Mountains Into Molehills aims to build understanding of self and others. It integrates relevant theory with practical step by step guides to coping with stressful situations, and handling difficult situations assertively.

Chapter One: Emotional Intelligence *Self Awareness - Understanding Self And Others*

1. *Foreword*
2. *Ten propositions key to understanding self and others*
3. *The supercomputer we call 'brain'*
4. *Our unique individual view of 'reality'*
5. *The subconscious autopilot*
6. *Thoughts, feeling, and behaviours driven by yesterday*
7. *We are blind to some aspects of ourselves*
8. *Ego states: our multiple personalities*
9. *We often relate to people as though they were someone else.*
10. *Unconscious internal processes which cause conflict*
11. *Unhelpful beliefs*
12. *External locus of evaluation*
13. *The prison we live in*
14. *Grains of truth we turn into distorted, self limiting, thinking*
15. *Should and shouldn'ts – lies that rule*
16. *Counselling works*
17. *Reading List*

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To visit Brian's home website page at www.brianamartin.co.uk simply click this link
To return to [Mountains Into Molehills Contents](#) page simply click this link

Access my other book 'The Anger Management Programme' at

www.angermanagementprogramme.co.uk .

FOUR BOOKS IN ONE

Module One: Anger Management & Impulse Control

Module Two: Anger Release & Self Calming

Module Three: Conflict Resolution Skills for Couples

Module Four: Advice for Couples in Conflict

Introduction: Ten Keys To Self Awareness & Personal Growth

'Mountains Into Molehills' is a summary of the core learning resulting from my personal experience as a counsellor, mediator, personal coach, student, and teacher over the last ten years. It derives also from over three decades as a manager and from the roller coaster of more than sixty years of life on the planet.

The catalyst for my writing was in 1995 when I decided on a post retirement new career as a counsellor. I discovered that there were many different approaches to counselling and psychotherapy. I felt the need to answer questions 'Does counselling work, and if so how', 'Why does it work', 'Which sort of counselling works best'. Chapter Ten 'Understanding Counselling' summarises where I have got to in answering these questions.

From the great mass of material available I have tried to identify the core insights which hold the key to personal growth, to recovery from emotional pain, to good relationships, and to greater happiness. I have distilled what I believe to be the essence of many different approaches to Counselling and Personal Development so they may be easily understood by myself, by students, and by the intelligent lay reader.

I have also provided practical step by step behavioural guides to handling many of life's difficult emotions, difficult situations, and difficult conversations.

The opening chapter 'Ten Propositions' was inspired by the thought.....

'If my teaching and my work with clients were somehow artificially restricted so I could have only one hour contact, what might be the best use of that time? What would I choose to share in that hour?

After much reflection I decided on the 'Ten Propositions' which many past students and clients have found mind opening. During my own personal development path I too have shared that feeling of 'eureka' on discovering these concepts.

In writing 'Mountains Into Molehills' I acknowledge my total indebtedness to the work of Adler, Bandler, Bandura, Berne, Bion, Bowlby, Ellis, Erickson, Foulkes, Freud, Glasser, Jung, Klein, Maslow, Perls, Rogers, Skinner, and Winnicott, and the many followers who have subsequently developed and built on their work. They had the insights that have transformed our understanding of self and others.

Brian A Martin

February 2005

Ten Propositions Key To Self Awareness and Personal Growth

[Each proposition is expanded later in this chapter]

1. Proposition One Our brain can be helpfully compared to a super advanced computer. The programming started even before we were conceived with the genetic material of our blood parents. We then continued to add to the programme the lessons from our tens of thousands of life experiences. Many of the lessons, and decisions about ourselves, others, and the world, were made during our infant and early childhood years and we have no conscious awareness of them.

2. Proposition Two There is no fixed reality – only our personal unique view of what reality is. We function on the basis of a unique 'Map of The World' which holds all our beliefs and assumptions about ourselves, others, and the world. Some of those beliefs are not valid and are unhelpful. Although we as human beings share many traits we are each unique with a unique view of reality, a unique view of what is and isn't so, what is and isn't right, what is and isn't fair, what is and isn't good.

3. Proposition Three We each have a subconscious mind which has imprinted every significant memory, every important decision, and all our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world. Lessons too painful to be admitted into consciousness are stored there.

4. Proposition Four The way we feel, think, and behave usually has nothing to do with the 'here and now' but is driven, outside our awareness, from our subconscious mind. In fact its a though we are living out a 'Life Script' an habitual repeat pattern of feelings, behaviours, and thoughts which we will play and replay endlessly unless we accomplish changes in the script.

5. Proposition Five We are blind to some aspects of ourselves which are obvious to other. When we take the trouble to understand how others see us it can help us decide if we want to change anything about the way we are.

6. Proposition Six We have more than one state of mind or 'Ego State'. We move rapidly and often from one Ego State to another during the course of each day depending on the situation and who we are with. For example: sometimes we feel, think, and act with other adults as though they are children. Sometimes we feel, think, and act as we would have done in that situation as a child. The Ego State we are in governs our interaction with others, our behaviours, and our thoughts and feelings about ourselves. ['Understanding Transactional Analysis' Chapter Eleven]

7. Proposition Seven Outside our conscious awareness we often relate to people as though they were someone else. This causes us to stick 'horns' or 'halos' on people regardless of whether they deserve it. This is called 'Transference'.

Also, we are often and instantly transported back to thoughts, feelings, and behaviours relating to a past experience and re-experience those thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in relation to something happening in the here and now. For example, a slamming door can transport someone whose family life as a child was marred by family rows, right back to the same feelings that she experienced as a child in that situation. This called 'Association' or 'Rubber banding'.

8. Proposition Eight Each of us has unconscious internal processes which cause conflict and poor relationships. Some of the main ones are listed later in this chapter – in Section Eight.

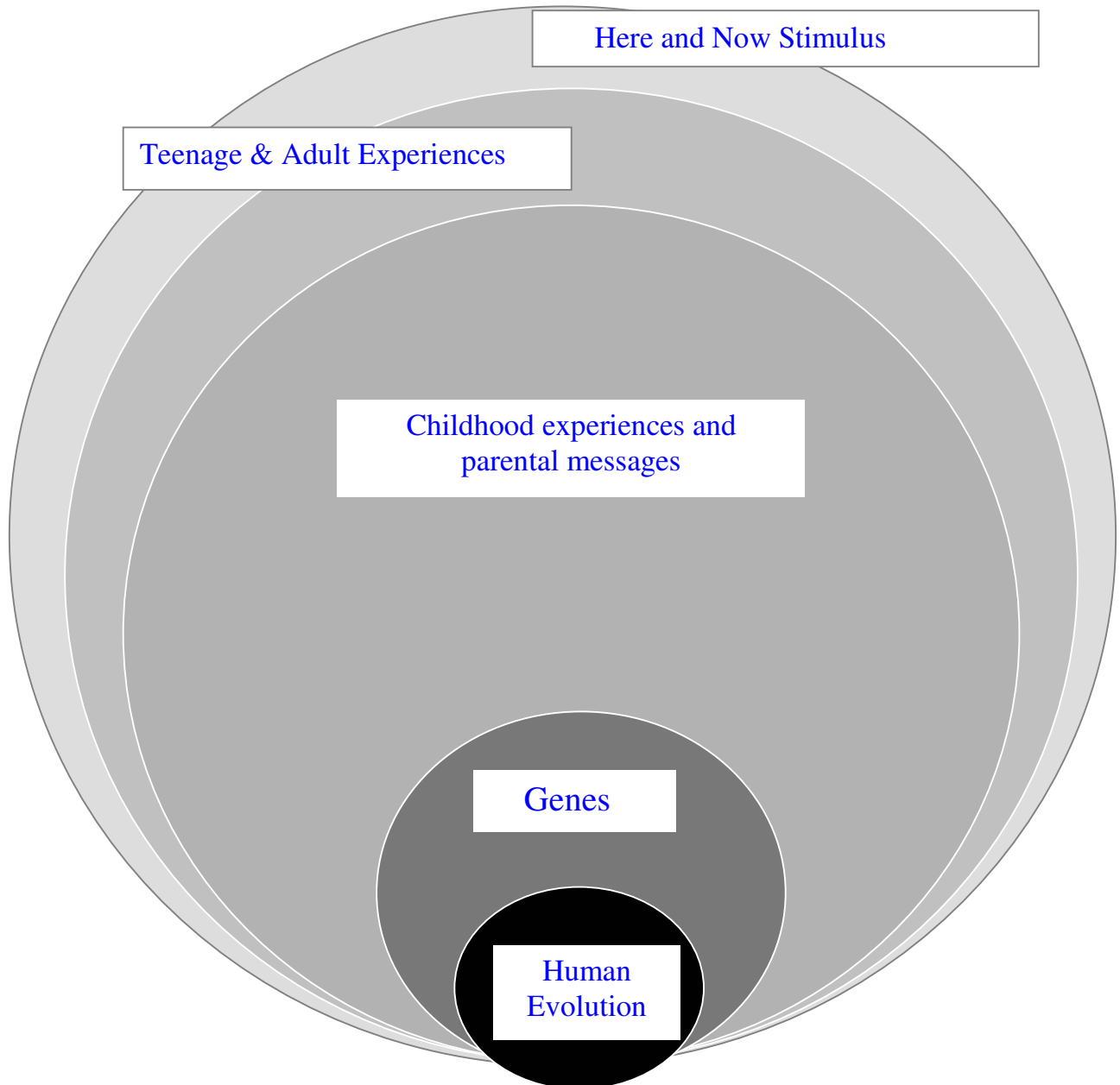
9. Proposition Nine Each of us has the propensity for unhelpful self limiting thinking patterns which lead to low self esteem, passivity, lack of assertiveness, and poor relationships. We each construct a safe 'prison' outside which we are afraid to venture and which restricts our potential for personal growth and happiness. This pattern of unhelpful and self limiting thinking is often driven by over emphasising the importance of pleasing others. Some of these unhelpful and self limiting thoughts are listed later in this chapter - in Section Nine.

10. Proposition Ten Counselling and Psychotherapy help us to improve our 'Map of The World' by revising unhelpful thoughts, filling in missing information, and adding more helpful experience. This enables us to make more sense of things, to cope, to solve problems, and to discharge unhelpful trapped pain 'unfinished business'. Chapter Ten 'Understanding Counselling' expands on this.

1. Proposition One *The supercomputer we call 'brain' .*

The programming started even before we were conceived with the genetic material of our blood parents. We then continued to add to the programme the lessons from our tens of thousands of life experiences. Many of the lessons, and decisions about ourselves, others, and the world, were made during our infant and early childhood years and we have no conscious recall of them.

The chart shows how our unique 'Map of the World', comprising all our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world, is built in layers over time.



2. Proposition Two There is no fixed reality - only our personal unique view of what reality.

We function on the basis of a unique 'Map of The World' which holds all our beliefs and assumptions about ourselves, others, and the world. Some of those beliefs are not valid and are unhelpful. Although we as human beings share many traits we are each unique with a unique view of reality, a unique view of what is and isn't so, what is and isn't right, what is and isn't fair, what is and isn't good.

There seems to be general agreement between psychologists, psychotherapists, and counsellors that we are a product of many influences, chaotic in their source and impact. It seems that even before our conception some of what we are was already decided, gifted us by destiny via the genes of our parents. Opinions vary as to how much of personality comes to us that way but there seems to be an emerging consensus that we will already be shaped as having a tendency to be either extrovert or introvert before we are born. There is also growing evidence that our 'in womb' environment has also impacted on our development, as has the actual birth experience and our first few minutes on the planet.

Throughout our lives, but particularly as young children, we have been exposed to a unique set of experiences which have shaped the way we are. Many of the most fundamental life shaping experiences will have occurred so early in life that recall is impossible; out of awareness these early experiences now act as an 'auto pilot' on the way we are.

The circumstances of our birth and early years, the culture into which we were born, our observation of the way influential parental figures behaved, pleasurable experiences, painful experiences, our learned ways of getting what we want, our experience of reaching out and being rebuffed – or not, and countless other experiences have all helped shape the way each of us now is.

There is a colossal amount of material on the theory of our personal development and growth. If you want to explore this subject more you will find ample opportunities in the Reading List on page 25.

Whatever set of beliefs about our development you prefer, one thing is absolutely certain, each of us is the product of a complex and unique set of influences. Another thing is equally certain – some of us have mainly good self esteem, are confident, assertive, happy, and live a life low in fear. In stark contrast others are low in self esteem, lacking in confidence, unassertive, unhappy a lot of the time, and have lives where fear is frequently experienced about even the smallest of things.

The population of the world is not divided between people at the two extremes I have described. True, there are some people at the extreme positions, but most of us are somewhere on a continuum between the two extremes. Sometimes we are confident, assertive, and happy. At other times we are not.

3. Proposition Three We each have a subconscious mind which holds our 'Map of The World ' and acts as an autopilot in many situations

We each have a subconscious mind which has imprinted every significant memory, every important decision, and all our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world. Lessons too painful to be admitted into consciousness are recorded there.

A consequence of our each being the product of a complex and unique set of influences is that each have a complex set of beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world, a set of beliefs which is as unique as our fingerprints.

This means that we each look at the world in a unique way, through personal lenses which distort 'reality,' bend it in ways which are consistent with what we believe to be so. We cannot detect these distortions without help – after all, to us they constitute our reality! Each of us proceeds in the belief that we know what 'reality ' is. How can this be so? There are over 6 billion of us on the planet. No two people have an identical set of beliefs about themselves, the world, and others. Is your 'reality' the same as mine?

The result of our unique view of things is that we each have a unique 'Frame of Reference' against which to perceive others. When others offend against our beliefs about what is so, what is right and what is wrong, what is good or bad, what is fair or unfair, what is just or unjust, what is good taste or not, etc etc etc our instinct is to reject, attack, judge, condemn.

It is not the difference between us that is the problem. It is our intolerance of the difference. Our unique perspective is the basis for prejudice and a source of friction and conflict.

Frame of Reference - Schiff

'An overall perceptual, conceptual, affective and action set which is used to define the self, other people, and the world' 'A filter on reality'

4. Proposition Four The way we feel, think, and behave often has nothing to do with the 'here and now'

The way we feel, think, and behave usually has nothing to do with the 'here and now' but is driven, outside our awareness, from our subconscious mind. In fact its a though we are living out a 'Life Script' an habitual repeat pattern of feelings, behaviours, and thoughts which we will play and replay endlessly unless we accomplish changes in our script. This is expanded in Chapter Eleven 'Introduction to Transactional Analysis'.

Script 'An unconscious life plan, made in childhood, reinforced by parents, justified by subsequent events, and culminating in a chosen alternative'

Berne

'A blue print for a life course' Steiner

5. Proposition Five We are blind to some aspects of ourselves which are obvious to others.

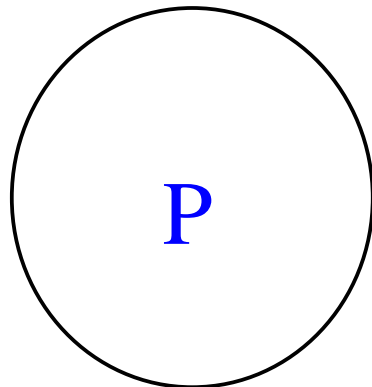
Johari's Window postulates that its as if there are four window sections through which we understand, or fail to understand ourselves. The fact that there are many things which we know about ourselves [Open and Hidden windows] is easy to agree with and already in general awareness. However the fact that we do not see ourselves as others see us [Blind window], and that there is a body of information totally outside our awareness [Unknown] is often quite a revelation. It is in the area of Blind and Unknown that much counselling work falls,

Johari's Window

<p>OPEN</p> <p>That about us which is known to self and by others</p>	<p>BLIND</p> <p>That about us which is apparent to others but not to us</p>
<p>HIDDEN</p> <p>That about us which is known to self but hidden from others</p>	<p>UNKNOWN</p> <p>That about us which is unknown to self or to others</p>

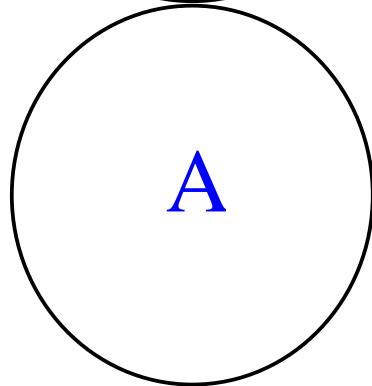
Proposition Six We have more than one state of mind or 'Ego State'.

We move rapidly and often from one Ego State to another during the course of each day depending on the situation and who we are with. For example: sometimes we feel, think, and act with other adults as though they are children. Sometimes we feel, think, and act as we would have done in that situation as a child. The Ego State we are in governs our interaction with others, our behaviours, and our thoughts and feelings about ourselves. ['Understanding Transactional Analysis' Chapter Eleven]



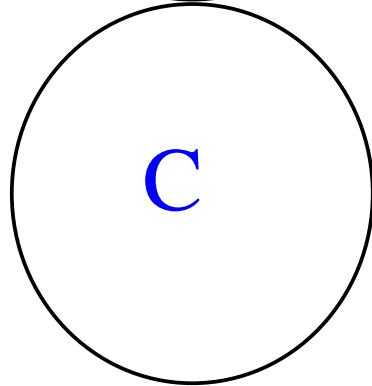
Parent Ego State

Behaviours, thoughts, and feelings copied or introjected from parent figures



Adult Ego State

Behaviours, thoughts, and feelings which are in direct response to the 'here and now'



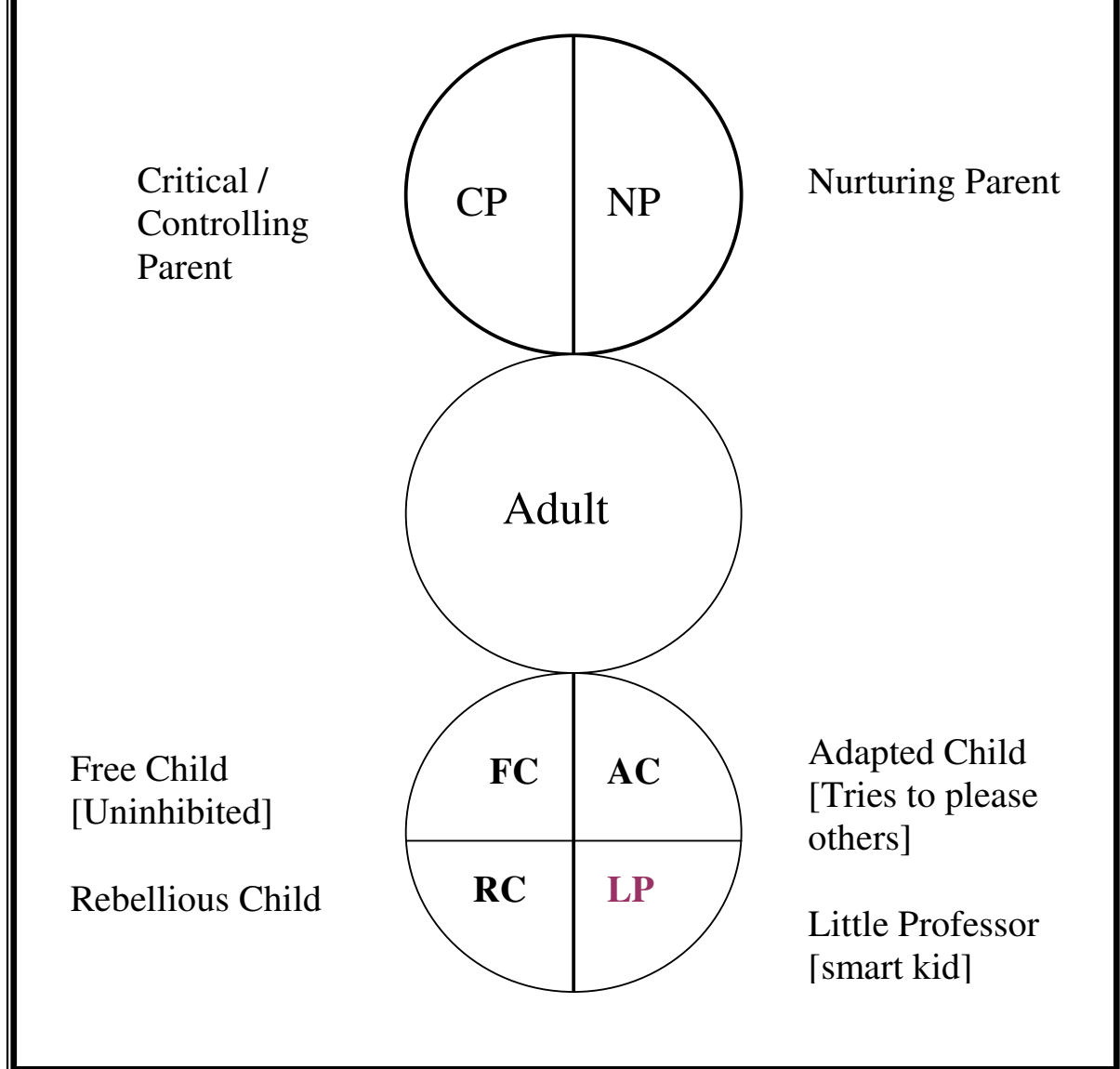
Child Ego State

Archaic behaviours, thoughts, and feelings replayed from childhood

Eric Berne discovered that we communicate both internally and externally from different Ego States and they we move rapidly from one Ego State to another according to the context and the environment

Ego States

However, there are many different kinds of Child and Parent Ego States!



Berne realised that when we act on archaic messages and replay archaic patterns of behaviour the nature of the messages and behaviour would depend on the nature of the original parental messages and the way we experienced them. Therefore parental messages could be helpful and empowering or unhelpful and self limiting. Our childhood learned response also varies e.g. a Controlling Parent might either result in lifelong learning to please or in being a rebel.

7. Proposition Seven Outside our conscious awareness we often relate to people as though they were someone else.

This is called Transference. Which causes us to a mask of somebody else on a person, and to stick 'horns' or halos' on people regardless of whether they deserve it.

The whole concept of Transference is too specialist a subject to deal with in any depth in a work of this kind. Transference is a complicated phenomenon for counsellors and impacts on the way a client experiences and acts towards the counsellor, and vice versa. The counsellor is what the client believes about the counsellor, not what the counsellor really is. The counsellor may find him or herself reacting to the what the clients believe they are, rather than the 'real client.

At its simplest Transference can be thought about as our brain making connections between anything about this person that reminds us about another person from the past. It seems that the function of the brain in doing this is to be helpful, to keep us safe. If our brain is able to link anything about this person, the way they look, walk, talk, hold themselves, behave, it saves us the trouble of having to work out again whether people with this or that characteristic are like to make good friends or bad enemies.

Transference also links with stereotyping, our tendency to think that all people in a particular group have the set of thinking, feeling, and behaving. We have an immediate set of thoughts and feelings about a particular sex, age group, position holder, etc. Therefore we may assume that an aging man may have very fixed views about things and stopped learning a long time ago, whereas many older man do their best work once past sixty!

The need is to be aware that when you think, or feel, something about a person which is not based on personal knowledge you may be falsely assessing them, sticking on unwarranted 'horns' or a halo.

Association and 'Rubber Banding'

We are often instantly transported back to thoughts, feelings, and behaviours relating to a past experience and re-experience those thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in relation to something happening in the here and now. For example, a slamming door can transport someone whose family life as a child was marred by family rows, right back to the same feelings that she experienced as a child in that situation. 'Rubber banding' can be caused by many things. Sometimes nice things, sometimes not.

Some of the stimuli for Association and 'Rubber Banding'

Smells, colours, sounds, words, places, types of people, news, events, photographs, etc. An example of association would be a client who has a panic attack every time she sees a man in a particular type of coat. This immediately associates her back to the man who abused her as a child. Unaware of the link which is being made out of her awareness by her subconscious she feels panicky and thinks 'There is something wrong with me: I'm not normal' All phobias are caused by association of one kind or another.

Proposition Eight Each of us has unconscious internal processes which cause conflict and poor relationships.

Here are some of our unconscious internal processes when relating to others. These drive our behaviour and thinking without our being aware of their impact.

We are all, more or less,

- Guided by our incomplete and distorted personal 'Map of the World'
- To some degree intolerant of difference and diversity
- Instinctively judgmental.
- Collectors of anger stamps
- Prone to displace our anger
- Prone to irrational fears
- Programmed to fight, run, or freeze in the face of fear i.e. not be assertive
- Unable to stop our body revealing how we feel
- Unable to stop our body telling people when we don't like them
- Paranoid
- Inclined to believe that we can read minds.
- Often seeing only what we expect to see, hearing what we expect to hear
- Generators of self fulfilling prophesies
- Prone to first impressions which are often wrong
- Different personalities
- Less socially skilled when stressed

1. Guided by an incomplete and distorted personal 'Map of the World'

We each have a unique 'Map of the World', a unique set of beliefs about our self, others, and the world. We judge others [and ourselves!] on the basis of this personal map view. This map contains all of our beliefs about what is right, wrong, good, bad, fair, unfair. No two maps are ever the same and when they differ in an aspect which is important to us conflict occurs.

2. Intolerant of difference and diversity It is not the differences between us that is the problem. It is our intolerance of the differences. Our personal unique perspective is the basis for prejudice and a source of friction and conflict.

3. Instinctively judgmental We are all instinctively judgmental. Yes, you too! Its part of the way each of us has been designed by evolution. Being judgmental is a safety mechanism to enable us to assess possible danger. We are programmed to try judge on very little information, judge people only on that small part of the way they are which we can observe.

4. Collectors of anger stamps Instead of being open when people upset us we tend to store up the incidents. Our resentment grows and communication breaks down. When the opportunity to get even presents itself we may try to get even in an 'over the top' way with a big relationship shattering bust up.

5. Prone to displace our anger Instead of trying to resolve our anger with the source of our anger we tend to take it out on others. Its called 'kicking the cat'

6. Prone to irrational fears We hold back from open communication because of fear of the consequences. Often the fear is misplaced and the possible consequence exaggerated out of all proportion. We are prone to many other irrational fears which make us shy, insecure, lacking in confidence, and occasionally phobic.

7. Programmed to fight, run, or freeze in the face of fear

Assertive communication and conflict resolution tactics does not fit our evolutionary programming. Our primeval instinct is aggression, avoidance, passivity.

8. Unable to stop our body revealing how we feel It is generally accepted that as much as 90% of communication of emotions is non-verbal – our body language, including the intonation in our voice and facial expression tells people when we don't like them.

We don't like someone. Maybe its because we think they don't like us. Our non-verbal communication leaves them in no doubt that we don't like them. They respond accordingly. We respond. They respond. A vicious cycle is underway. The question that may never be answered is 'Who started it, sent the first signal?' Whoever did, the fact is that there is now a self perpetuating cycle of interpersonal conflict prone behaviour. And not a word was spoken!

Proposition Eight [continued]

9. Vulnerable to transference We often relate to people as though they were someone else. Outside our awareness something about them, the way they look, talk, behave, hold themselves, etc reminds us of a figure from our past. This causes us to stick 'horns' or halos' on people regardless of whether they deserve it.

10. Paranoid We are all a bit paranoid! Its another part of our defence system. Its purpose is to help us identify danger. This is why we may find ourselves assuming people don't like us, or are talking about us when laughter is suppressed, or people stop talking and start whispering when we walk into the room. Paranoia springs us into taking things personally when there are alternative possibilities e.g. when someone ignores us – which may due to stress or preoccupation with a personal problem, we may think they are 'getting at us'. If someone disagrees with us we may think they are putting us down when they are simply exercising their assertive right to have a different opinion.

11. Mind readers We jump to conclusions about what people mean. We cut people off believing we know what they are going to say. We believe others can mind read too 'they should know what I want' 'They should know what I meant without my having to explain'.

12. Seeing only what we expect to see Once we have made our mind up about someone we tend to notice only those things which they do which support the conclusion about them which we have initially come to. For example when we don't like someone we may interpret their anxiety as aggression, their shyness as standoffishness, their not acknowledging us as deliberately ignoring us. In other words we interpret everything they do in a negative way. We can become blind to their good points. We are also prone to accept misinformation and rumours if it fits what we have decided.

13. Generators of self fulfilling prophecies We tend to get what we expect by making it come true. 'There will be trouble between us, I can see it coming!' Surprise surprise, there is!

14. Prone to stereotyping Part of our being judgmental is a tendency to stereotype. We may tend to assume that someone who is for example, powerful, scruffy, gay, drug taking, long term unemployed, etc does not have decent 'proper' values. We judge people by the friends they keep, by the clothes they wear, and the cars they drive. sometimes even by the dogs they own! We tend to attack those different to us fitting them into compartments and thinking everyone in the compartment is the same. We pride ourselves on our first impressions which are often wrong.

15. Different personalities The personality differences between us can be a source of creativity but are also often a source of conflict [Chapter Four 'Why Conflict Occurs']

16. Less socially skilled when stressed When we are stressed we tend to revert to more natural behaviours and abandon our learned social skills. Stress can make us rude, inconsiderate, bad tempered, and self focussed.

9. Proposition Nine *Each of us has the propensity for unhelpful self limiting thinking patterns* which lead to low self esteem, passivity, lack of assertiveness, and poor relationships. We each construct a safe 'prison' outside [page 18] which we are afraid to venture and which restricts our potential for personal growth and happiness. This pattern of unhelpful and self limiting thinking is often driven by over emphasising the importance of pleasing others [page 17] Some of these unhelpful and self limiting thoughts are listed on pages 19 – 23.

No-one is free of some beliefs about self, others, and the world which are distorted, inaccurate, and unhelpful. This is not because we are foolish. Often we have sound original reasons for believing what we believe, however distorted, inaccurate, or unhelpful. What we believe may have been valid to us as children. What we believe usually has a 'grain of truth' from which we exaggerate. We have drawn our conclusions from our unique life experiences and our interaction with parental figures and other figures. Unfortunately the conclusions we have drawn, and which form the basis of our beliefs, are not valid, or no longer valid.

Feelings flow from beliefs – so they will not change until beliefs do. If we want to change the way we feel we need to change our unhelpful beliefs! To help change unhelpful beliefs we need to identify what they are and re-examine them. For some of our beliefs this is easy. We recognise the belief when confronted and are able to agree 'Yes, I believe that'.

Unconscious beliefs can usually only be brought into awareness by analysing the thinking, feelings, and behaviours which those beliefs drive. Important indications come from the language we use. We often say 'Its only a figure of speech' when in fact it is a surface indicator of things much deeper.

Identifying an unhelpful belief is one thing, changing it is another! Some beliefs can easily be changed once they are brought into awareness and confronted. Other beliefs are very difficult to change and require therapy. So you may easily come to realise that a belief that fat people are normally lazy, fat, and stupid is not supported by the facts. However the deluded belief that you are worthless will be stubborn and may require a great deal of professionally supported work to change it.

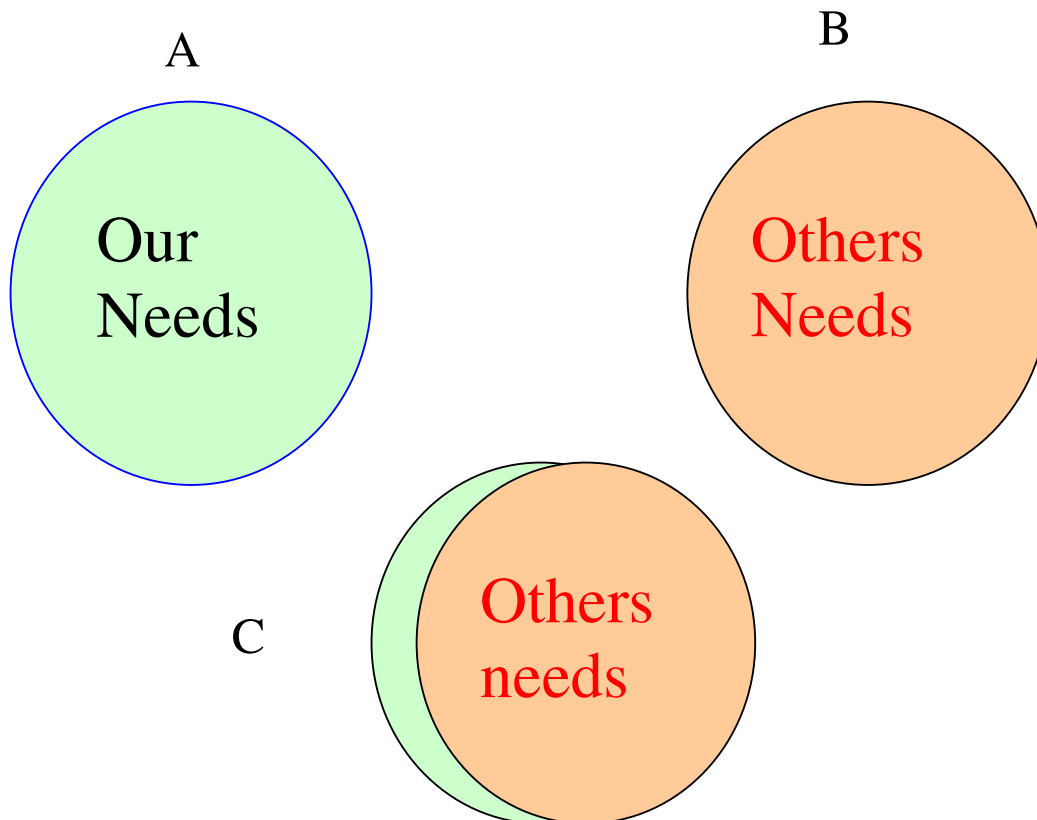
When we have identified an unhelpful belief we need to get into the habit of spotting each repetition of the unhelpful thoughts driven by the unhelpful belief. We have to get into the habit of instantly switching from each unhelpful thought to new and more helpful thought. Therefore, for each unhelpful thought we habitually have we need to decide on a more helpful alternatives we can switch to. This chapter lists unhelpful beliefs, thinking driven by unhelpful beliefs, and behaviours driven by unhelpful beliefs. You may care to go down the list. It should enable you to identify some of your own unhelpful beliefs, thinking, feelings, and behaviours.

Unhelpful and self limiting thinking and behaviour is often driven by over emphasising the importance of pleasing others

A *As babies we are totally focussed on our own needs*

B *As we grow we become aware of other peoples needs and expectations. We learn that its not wise to ignore other peoples needs and expectations, they have the power to punish us, to reject us. We learn that life is a balancing act between our needs and the needs of others.*

C *Unfortunately we can move too far towards being what other people want us to be, to satisfying others needs only, and bury our own needs. When this happens we become passive and don't pursue our assertive rights*



We each construct a safe 'prison' outside which we are afraid to venture



What we are capable of being

Prisoner Of Fear

What size is the prison you live in?

In her best seller 'Feel The Fear and Do It anyway' Susan Jeffers describes how we imprison ourselves with our fears – and how to break out!

9. Proposition Nine [continued]

Each of us has the propensity for unhelpful self limiting thinking patterns

Some Common Unhelpful Beliefs & Thinking

Which one's do you recognise as you?

Those which you don't think are you....are you absolutely positive? Think about your behaviour, about how you are with other people. Maybe you are not conscious of the belief – that its operating from your subconscious!

Some of the beliefs listed you may dismiss as rubbish, 'that's not me'. Yet your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours give the game away – you hold that belief outside your awareness.

On some of the items you may find yourself saying strongly 'Surely that's true, that's right – unhelpful it may be, but its true so I shouldn't try to change it'. Of course you believe your beliefs! That doesn't mean they are valid.

Usually a belief has a grain of truth and becomes delusional only when we behave as though it is always true. You may have met some lazy fat people – the delusional thought would be assuming that all fat people are lazy. Look for some high energy fat people and you will find plenty.

Look out for the grain of truth which you are turning into a whole granary!

Unhelpful Beliefs

1. Belief My 'Map of the World' is accurate. I know what's right and wrong and any right minded person thinks the same as me.

No it isn't, no you don't, not true. The only other person with the same 'Map of the World' as you is someone with the same parents, who had exactly the same life experiences as you down to the smallest detail. In other words no-one. Even identical twins don't have the same Map of the World.

2. Belief I can't.....

This is used a great deal when talking about things we are scared to attempt. It's negative self hypnosis, its disempowering, and it's a lie. We usually can, but we are scared to. Its much better to say 'I choose not to' which is much more empowering

3. Belief Its not normal to feel afraid in new social situations. It would be a disaster to let it show when I am nervous

Its quite normal to feel anxious in new situations. Everyone knows what it feels like and anyone worth your caring about will feel supportive if they detect your anxiety – which they normally won't.

4. Belief I couldn't stand it 'itis' e.g. I couldn't stand the embarrassment, 'I couldn't stand them knowing' 'I couldn't bear it if they thought that about me'.

Embarrassment is really hard to handle but the fact is that no-one ever died of embarrassment. Embarrassment is soon over, draws a sympathetic response from those who observe it, and forgotten in no time at all.

5. Belief I must always please other people if I want to be accepted by them.

You can't always please people, its impossible, and you shouldn't try. Being assertive is essential if you are not going to be walked all over, be put on, and be discounted.

6. Belief People are capable of hurting me by the what they think about me....

How long have you believed in black magic?

7. Belief Everything I do must be perfect.

Says who? Try being less perfect and see if it kills you!

8. Belief I must keep up appearances.

OK. Sometimes its good to pretend, but as a way of life it's a disaster.

9. Belief My low self esteem is fully justified because

Depends on the 'because', perhaps you are a truly despicable person milking life without putting anything back, constantly being deliberately cruel to furry animals, and a multi murderer to boot. More probably you are judging yourself completely unfairly on one or two aspects of yourself you don't like.

Don't judge yourself harder than you would a friend. Get therapeutic help if low self esteem is significantly impacting on your life.

10. Belief Whenever people are unfriendly or ignore me it means they have gone off me or they don't like me.

Sometimes when people ignore you or are unfriendly it will be because they don't like you, after all you can't please everyone. Usually however it will be because they are preoccupied with their own thoughts and feeling and ignoring yours. Also, if you think they don't like you your body language may be telling them and they are only reacting to the way you are with them. Try being the first smile, making the first move, thinking about what they need from you – not what you need from them.

11. Belief I must not risk making matters worse by saying how I feel

Sometimes this is sensible. Usually however it will lead to communication breakdown. Assertive behaviour is very much about being open about the way you feel. When its safe to do so.

12. Belief People , things, and situations, have the power to make me angry

No they don't. That would be magic. You choose to be angry and you can choose not to be angry. Please read Chapter Nine 'Managing Anger'

13. Belief I can never forgive what he/ she did.

Yes you could if you chose to. Truth is your anger is important to you and hard to let go. Recognise that it is a choice you are making, and remember your decision not to forgive is hurting you, not him or her. In this way you are letting them add hurt to hurt.

14. Belief People are trying to put me down when they disagree with my opinions

Sometimes true! More often they will be exercising their assertive right to have an opinion. Remember that each of us has a different set of beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world so its not surprising that opinions differ. After all, they don't know everything you know, and you don't know everything they know. When someone disagrees with you try to work out how they could have come to such a different view.

15. Belief If I don't understand first time it proves I'm thick

Maybe, probably not. What does the rest of the evidence look like? Thicker than who? How do you know? What difference does it make? Learn to accept yourself for your qualities, not knock yourself for any deficiencies.

16. Belief Men should understand the way women feel [and vice versa]

Men and women might as well come form different planets. We have to learn understand each other because of the fundamental differences between us. Read 'Men Are From Mars, Women From Venus'

17. Belief If people knew my views they would ridicule them Maybe? So what?

18. Belief Catastrophising, awfulising, If this or that happened it would be unbearable, I could not cope'.

Maybe. However we human beings are born copers – and there is plenty of professional support available if the going gets too tough. Did you know that 99% of our fears never materialise and the ones that do are rarely as bad as we feared. Whenever you start to worry about future possibilities take any action you reasonably can to prepare. When you have done that put the thought away with another thought 'Whatever happens I can handle it. I may not know how at this point in time, but whatever happens I can handle it.' Or 'I'll cross that bridge if and when I come to it'

19. Belief Self fulfilling prophecy & Fortune Telling. 'I Told you so'.

You think you will fail – and you do. You fear your new neighbours will be unfriendly. You meet them. in the street. You are not sure whether to smile. You don't. They don't smile either. That proves you were right not to smile – they are obviously unfriendly. In fact they are only mirroring your behaviour.

20. Belief Magnification 'I really made a fool of myself at the party. I'll never be able to face them again' 'The presentation I made didn't go well they will think I am incompetent' 'I have had a row with my friend. She will not want me to be her friend in future'.

You are assuming permanent consequences from transient events – making mountains out of molehills, marble statues out of snowmen.

21. Belief Self condemnation on the basis of single events

I shouted at the kids this morning. I am a terrible mother'. Maybe! What's the rest of the evidence look like?

22. Belief I am not responsible for the way I behave considering what's happened to me, considering my disadvantages

Problem is that while you stay in this state of mind your are most unlikely to find happiness. You do have choices – one of them is remain stuck in your very unhappy place, not to take responsibility for your life.

23. Belief All or nothing thinking 'I can't have it all so I don't want any'.

'I want this [or that] and nothing less will do'.

'I want a two week break and so a weekend break is useless'.

When the bottle of life is half empty - consequence – pessimism

When the bottle of life is half full - consequence – hope

'Its not things that make us unhappy, it's the way we look at things'

Shoulds and shouldn'ts

As children we were taught lots of shoulds and shouldn'ts by the giants [adults]. They taught us about Father Christmas, the tooth fairy, about the big bad bogeyman who would come and get us if we were naughty. We unlearned all of that stuff, but lots of the other stuff we didn't unlearn, so far.....!

Examples Of Shoulds and Shouldn'ts

None of these is true, although all some of them might be true sometimes.

Some of the shoulds and shouldn't which you learned as a child now rule your life. You accept them as absolutes and follow them without question or pay the price – feeling bad about yourself. Which of these are your shoulds and shouldn'ts?

- I must always put my duty before myself
- I must always be strong
- I must never get angry or show anger
- I must never hurt anyone's feelings.
- I must never put myself first
- I must never show off or speak of my achievements.
- I must not cry or show emotional weakness
- I must not say 'No' If I don't help nobody will'.
- Always keep it in the family
- I shouldn't need help and support.
- Its not right to be happy when there is so much sadness in the world
- Unless I resist all temptation I am a weak person. 'I broke my diet so I am a weak"
- I should never interrupt or be impolite

You probably have some not on the list. What are they?

Sometimes it would be better to be this way or that way

.....but kill the words always, must, must not, never, should , and shouldn't – these are tyrannical words and usually a lie.

10. Proposition Ten Counselling and Psychotherapy help us to improve our 'Map of The World'

Counselling and Psychotherapy help us to improve our 'Map of The World', help us revise unhelpful thoughts, fill in missing information, add more helpful experience. This enables us to make more sense of things, to solve problems, and to discharge unhelpful trapped pain 'unfinished business'. Chapter Ten 'Understanding Counselling' expands on this.

How all the recognised approaches to counselling work

Although all counselling roads lead to the same destination they approach from diverse directions. These range from the empowering therapeutic relationship of Person Centred counselling through to the confronting of unhelpful thinking by Cognitive therapists: from the analytical approach of the Psychodynamic counsellor through to the coaching of new behaviours used by Behavioural therapists.

Some approaches are low in intervention [e.g. Person Centred] whilst others [e.g. Transactional Analysis] are high in intervention.

Unfortunately our 'Map of the World' is always incomplete with key pieces of information missing and some incorrect conclusions drawn about ourselves, the world, and others.

For some people their map of the world is robust and helpful, holding mainly positive beliefs about self, others, and the world. A positive map holds lots of options, is able to generate lots of ways to resolve problems.

For others the map is self limiting and unhelpful, holding beliefs which damage self esteem, cause communication [and therefore relationship] problems, and provide low ability to cope and solve problems. When life's crises come along even the beliefs comprising a robust and helpful map may become damaged. Trauma temporarily shatters some of our assumptions, destroys part of our map, 'knocks us for six'.

What all the recognised approaches to counselling do, one way or another, is help us recover and change faulty and unhelpful thinking by filling in missing information so we are able to understand ourselves, others, and the world in more constructive ways, cope, and solve problems. Counselling also helps us complete 'unfinished business' which clutters our map; to cope with, and make sense of, crisis so we can repair the damage done to our map.

Given the emergence of a very stressful, materially focussed, modern lifestyle, combined with the fragmentation of the family unit and the loss of traditional means of support [church, neighbours, family unit] counselling has emerged to fill the gap. It is very hard to imagine modern life without its availability.

Reading List

Four Approaches To Counselling & Psychotherapy Windy Dryden & Jill Mytton
ISBN 0 415 13992 7 An introduction and overview of some of the main approaches to counselling & Psychotherapy

Handbook of Individual Therapy Windy Dryden ISBN 0 8039 7843 X
An authoritative overview of the twelve key approaches to individual therapy

Thoughts & Feelings Mathew Mc Kay Martha Davis Patrick Fanning
ISBN 0 934986 03 07 The cognitive approach to stress

Counselling For Stress Problems ISBN 0 8039 8863 X
A multi-modal approach to stress counselling and stress management

Personality Adaptations Ian Stewart & Vann Joines ISBN 1 870244 01 X
A Guide To Human Understanding In Psychotherapy and Counselling

TA Today Ian Stewart & Vann Joines ISBN 1 870244 00 1
An introduction to Transactional Analysis

Person Centred Counselling In Action Dave Mearns & Brian Thorne I
SBN 0 7619 63710 Gives a real insight into Person Centred Counselling

Gestalt Therapy Frederick Perls Ralph Hefferline Paul Goodman
ISBN 0 285 62665 5 A practical insight into one of the main approaches to psychotherapy

Using Your Brain For A Change Richard Bandler ISBN 0 911226 27 3
Neuro Linguistic Programming

Introducing NLP Joseph O'Connor & John Seymour ISBN 1 85538 344 6
Psychological skills for understanding and influencing people

Hypnosis In Therapy HB Gibson & M Heap ISBN 0 86377 170 X
A comprehensive range of applications used in conjunction with other therapeutic and medical approaches

Shattered Assumptions Ronnie Janoff Bulman I SBN 0 7432 3625 4
How trauma shatters assumptions key to our 'Map Of the World'

The Undiscovered Mind John Horgan ISBN 0 297 84225 0
Freud, Prozac, genes, evolution, smart machines – this book challenges aspects of current thinking

The Brain Jack Challoner ISBN 0 7522 2326 7
An excellent introduction to an important area of biological science

Brain Story Susan Greenfield ISBN 0 563 55108 9
Brings together different thread of what we are now learning about the brain.