

**Your Behavior:  
A Concise Guide Aimed at Helping You  
Understand and Change the Things You Do**

**by  
Richard H. Pfau**



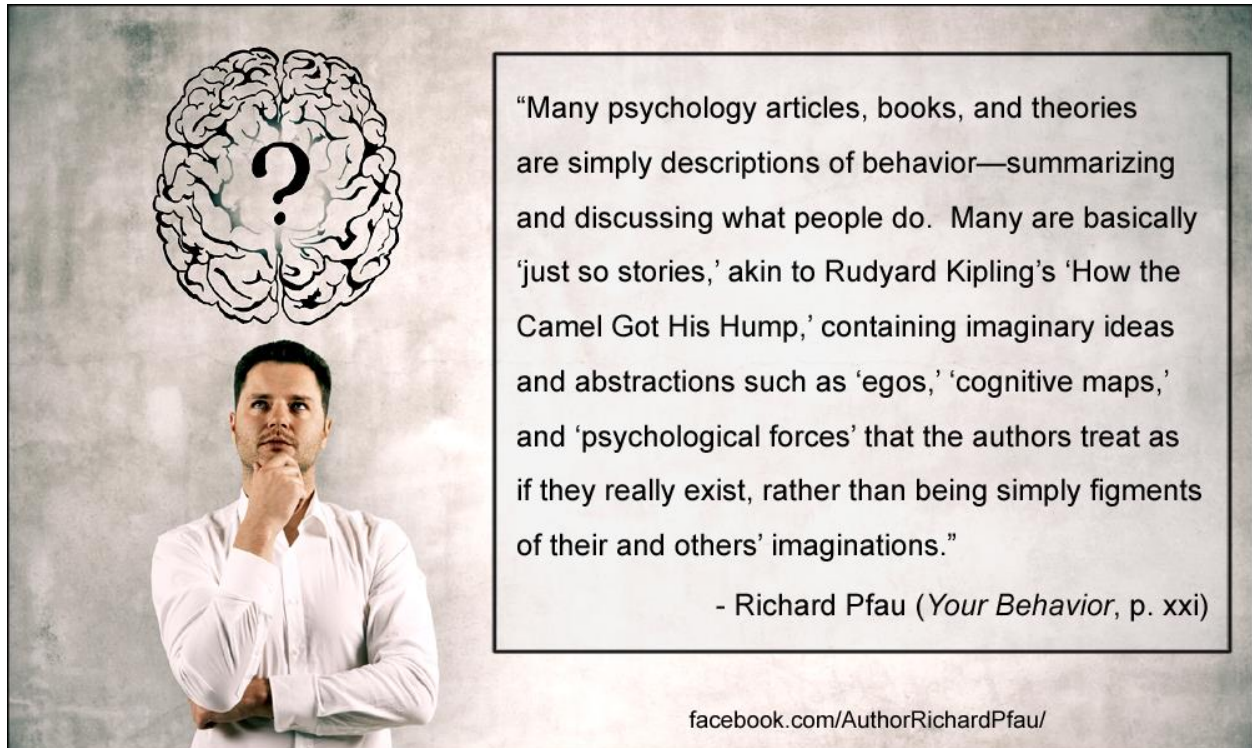
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The author is thankful for the services provided by Raymond Wykowski, web designer, in helping to create the graphic slides shown in this booklet that were originally prepared and displayed on my Facebook business site at <https://www.facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau>. The images shown were purchased royalty-free from iStock at <https://www.istockphoto.com>.

The author is also thankful for the feedback about an earlier draft of this work received from Fred Nickols, John Kirkland, and Bruce Nevin – longstanding, knowledgeable members of the International Association for Perceptual Control Theory (IAPCT) and contributors to its predecessor, the Control Theory Group.

## Preface

As its title indicates, this is a concise guide aimed at helping you to understand and change your behavior. In contrast to many publications, as indicated by the quote below, what follows is based on a scientific approach – one called Perceptual Control Theory.



“Many psychology articles, books, and theories are simply descriptions of behavior—summarizing and discussing what people do. Many are basically ‘just so stories,’ akin to Rudyard Kipling’s ‘How the Camel Got His Hump,’ containing imaginary ideas and abstractions such as ‘egos,’ ‘cognitive maps,’ and ‘psychological forces’ that the authors treat as if they really exist, rather than being simply figments of their and others’ imaginations.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. xxi)

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As you will see, the quote above and others on the following pages are from the book *Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2017).<sup>1</sup> That book and the present booklet are a reaction to the overall scattered and speculative state of psychology at the present time. They aim to synthesize work and thinking from psychology, sociology, anthropology, biology, cybernetics, and other areas into a coherent explanation of why you and other people do the things you do, in a way that can be understood by an average educated person as well as by professionals in the fields mentioned (Pfau, *Your Behavior*, 2017, p. xxi).

In short, what is presented are basic facts that can help you to understand and control your life better. Consider them carefully.

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<sup>1</sup> All of the quotes and Highlights provided were originally posted on the author’s Facebook business site at <https://www.facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/>. For reasons never fully explained, that site was disabled by Facebook during November 2022 for not following its Community Standards. Perhaps some of the quotes that you will see on the following pages about the media, politicians, and government are the reason?

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## Chapter 1. You Are a Survivor!

### A. Survival – A Key Idea

#### YOU ARE A SURVIVOR!



“You are a survivor. You are structured and organized to stay alive. So were your ancestors, from your parents on backwards to the farthest reaches of your ancestry. The same holds for everyone else on the earth today. You and they have all survived long enough to exist at this moment....”

Just think, all of your ancestors lived long enough to have a child, who then lived long enough to have a child, who then lived long enough to have a child, and so on, until you were born. None of your direct ancestors died in infancy, starved to death, or died of thirst before conceiving a child. None were killed by disease, eaten by animals, ate anything poisonous enough to kill them, had a fatal accident, were killed by someone else, and died before having a child from whom you are descended.”

Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 3-4)

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## Highlight 1.1

## Survival is Your Default Mode!

“Not a single one of our ancestors died in infancy. They all reached adulthood, and every single one was capable of finding at least one heterosexual partner and of successfully copulating.” (Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*, 1)

“...the possibility of death is always present, and survival... must be continuously won and re-won...”; “survival is conditional upon action...: failure to act successfully leads to death.” (Binswanger, *Biological Basis*, 6, 91)

- Richard Pfau Ph.D. (*Your Behavior*, p. 4)

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## You Are a Survivor!

Every day you avoid dying by obtaining the nutrients and energy you need to live. You avoid being killed. You avoid becoming deadly sick or starving to death. How? Because your body is structured and organized to live. It senses your environment and reacts to it in ways that help you survive.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 6)

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## B. Autopoiesis - Another Key Idea

“You and other living organisms are autopoietic beings, according to Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, two scholars from Chile. An autopoietic being is a continually self-producing system. You continually maintain the living structure of your body and, by doing so, survive...”

By understanding why you behave as you do, you'll be able to control your life better too.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. xxv & 7)




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### Why You Do What You Do

“What you do at any given moment depends on your internal organization and structure at that time. It depends on internal chemical processes, for example, between neurons, and between neurons and muscles.”

“The outside environment may trigger what you do. It may set into motion reactions on your part. But it does not cause you to do certain things or behave in specific ways. It does not specify what you do. What you do is determined by how you are structured and organized internally, not by outside events or objects.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 7)

An anatomical illustration of the human nervous system, showing the brain, spinal cord, and a complex network of peripheral nerves throughout the body. The illustration is rendered in a glowing, golden-yellow color against a dark background.

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## Behavior Depends on Perception



“Here’s an example. Suppose that someone walking at night sees a group of men on the sidewalk directly ahead. To avoid possible trouble, he or she crosses to the other side of the street and continues walking. A second person seeing the men walks past them, indifferently, hardly noticing the group. A third person seeing them, smiles broadly, walks up to them shakes hands with each, and warmly says, ‘Long time no see!’

While each of the three behaved differently, the group of men (the environment) was the same in each case. The environment may have triggered or influenced what each person did, but it did not cause them to react in a specific way. What each one did depended on how he or she perceived the situation.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 7-8)

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## Chapter 2. You Are Organized to Survive

### A. You Cope with Your External Environment

#### Highlight 2.5

#### Some Protective Functions of Your Body

**The process of metabolism:** maintaining an adequate oxygen supply, suitable body temperature, balance of internal chemistries, and regulation of blood pressure and flow.

**Basic Reflexes:** sneezing, coughing, gagging, vomiting, producing tears, blinking, yawning, and vocal crying when an infant.

**The Immune System:** coping with viruses, bacteria, parasites, and toxic chemical molecules.

**Slower Processes:** callous on skin, wound healing, blood changes at high altitudes.

**Feelings and Emotions:** pain, fear, anger, rage, disgust.

**Drives and Motivations:** hunger, thirst, temperature control, pain avoidance.

*Sources: Cannon, *Wisdom of the Body*; Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*; and Provine, *Curious Behavior*.*

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 18)

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## B. Perception and What You Do

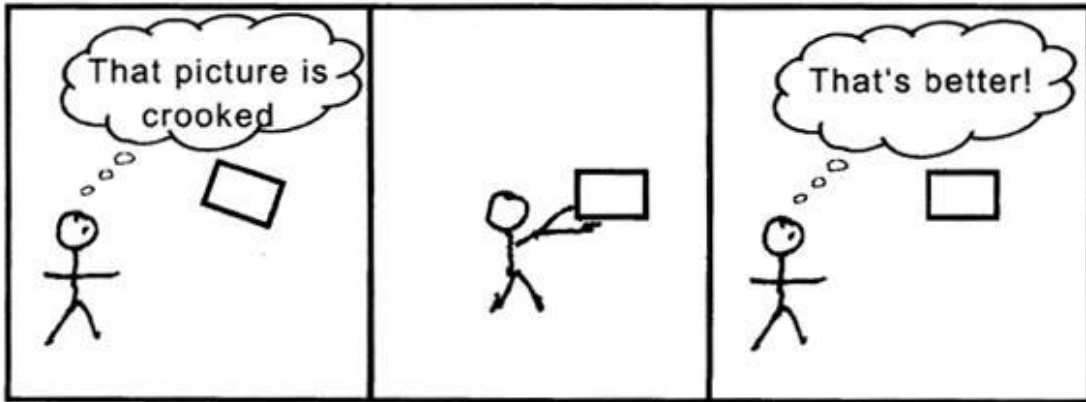


“When you do something, you do what you do in order to change or maintain your perceptions. This is a very important point....Behavior is the process by which we act on the world to control perceptions that matter to us.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 22)

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Many perceptions that matter to you are important to your survival. That’s why your body is organized to provide protective functions such as those mentioned in Highlight 2.5 on the previous page. Thanks to your nervous system, you are structured and organized to sense your environment—to detect dangers and opportunities around you and to react to those dangers and opportunities.



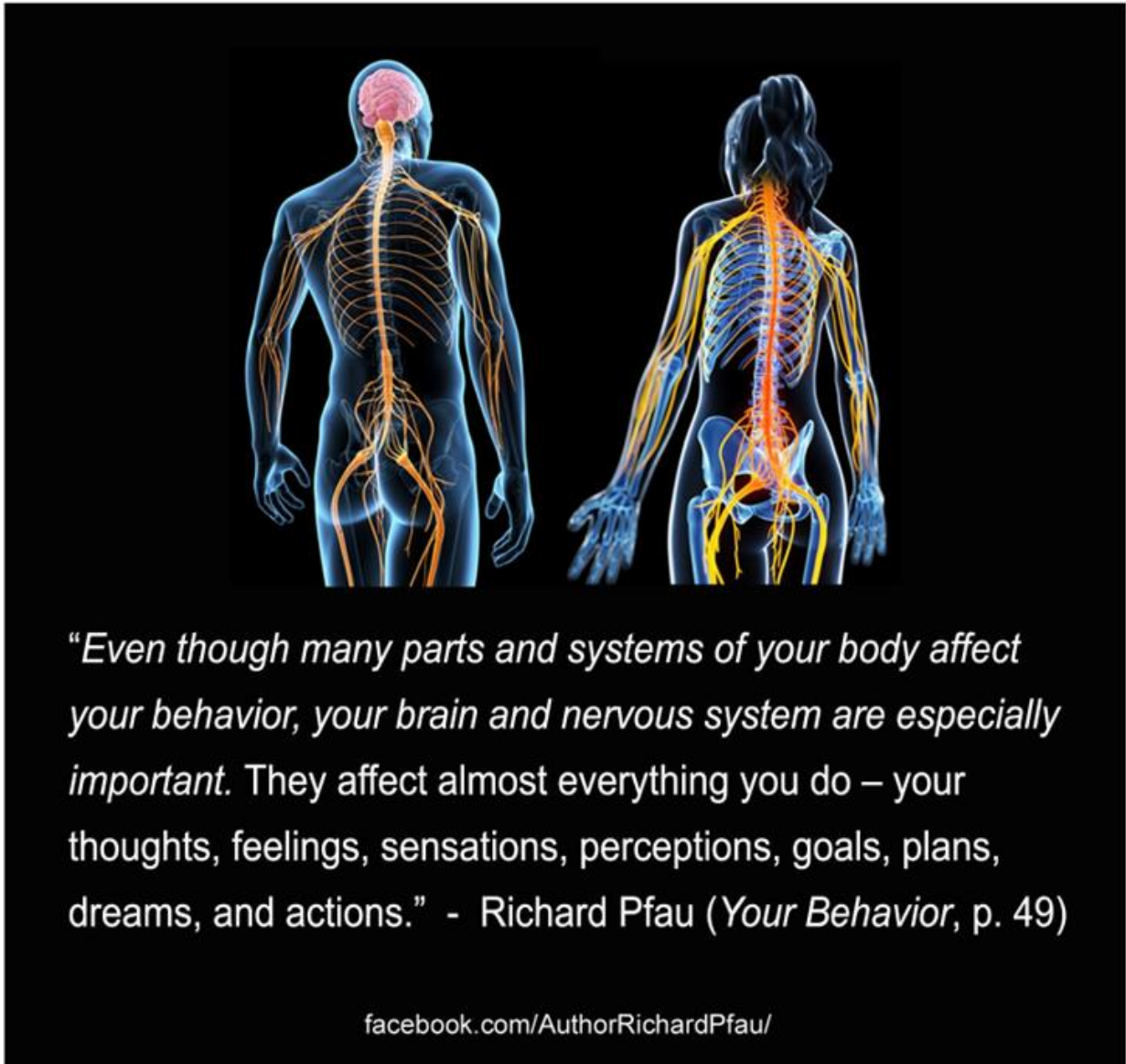
You do things to control perceptions that matter to you.

- Richard Pfau (Your Behavior, p. 22)

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## Chapter 3. What Affects What You Do – A Focus on Your Body

### A. Your Nervous System and Perceptions



You cannot be aware of things or react to them unless you can perceive them. Your sensory nerves enable you to do this—to react to light, sound, food, chemicals, and other matter.

### **Highlight 3.3** Perceptions Known to Affect Behavior

Perceptions of characteristics, opportunities, constraints, benefits, threats, feelings, and internal states shown by research to influence behavior include:

- **The attributes of another person:** Is the person friendly, honest, hostile, or a stranger, a thief, a banker, a doctor, a relative, a neighbor?
- **Appraisal of your context and situational cues:** Are you in a church, in a store, at a party, stopped by a policeman, in a burning building, walking in the woods, holding a hamburger or rat poison, in the path of an approaching car?
- **The expectations of others:** What do people expect you to do, especially those nearby who are a part of a situation you are in?
- **Inferences about social situations:** Might you be harmed or helped to do or achieve something you value? Is the person trying to sell you something?
- **Tastes and smells:** Such as bitter tastes, rotting smells, and delicious food.
- **Perceived efficacy:** Your confidence in your ability to do something.
- **Affective reactions and feelings:** Do you like or dislike what you are experiencing? Do you feel positively or negatively about the person, object, or situation, or about something you may do? Are you feeling angry, sad, depressed, disgusted, happy, confident?
- **Physiological states:** Hunger, thirst, sleepiness, being too warm or too cold, illness, pain, pregnancy.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p.32)

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## B. Perceptual Control Theory – An Explanation of What You Do

Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) was developed by William T. Powers. This theory explains that when we do things, it is to make our perceptions more in keeping with our goals, plans, survival needs, and other reference conditions. In other words, as Powers puts it, “Behavior is the control of perception.”

### According to Perceptual Control Theory ...

we behave to control our perceptions, so that what we perceive matches important references we have. What are these references? Below are some words that refer to them.

#### Highlight 3.4

#### Words Indicating References

**Common Terms:** goal, purpose, objective, intention, intent, desire, want, need, aim, value, preference, ambition, reason, concern, priority, yearning, aversion.

**Social Terms:** duty, moral or legal obligation, assurance, promise, pledge, commitment, solemn word, vow, word of honor, principle, norms, values, ideals, ideology, expectations of others, role, responsibility, chore, lawful/legal behavior, traditions, taboos, rules of behavior, commandments, mores, worldview.

**Terms Referring to Sequences:** standard procedure, modus operandi, script, schema, program, musical/dance score, choreography, critical path, recipe, program.

**Scientific Terms:** reference signal, reference value, reference level, reference condition, reference state, referent, set point, set zone, command signal, settling point, equilibrium point, stable state, preferred state, desired state, goal state, optimal outcome, optimal level, internal standard, function, display rules, phobia.

**Business and Military Terms:** target, mission, task, plan, blueprint, standard, assignment, strategy, benchmark, criteria, checklist, schedule.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p.33)

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Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) focuses on the idea that “Behavior is the control of perception.” In other words, you do things to control your perceptions.



REVOLUTION

“The theory represents what some professionals consider to be a revolution in psychological thinking analogous to the revolution in biological thinking started by Darwin’s theory of evolution.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 35-37)

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An outline of the PCT model is shown later in Chapter 10.

## Why You Do Things



“According to Powers, we do things to reduce differences between our perceptions and references until the differences, or ‘errors’ as he calls them, are eliminated or small enough to be ignored. We do this unless doing so (1) interferes with or conflicts with a more valued reference, (2) the error really does not make much practical difference, or (3) we think we aren’t able to do anything to reduce the error or achieve the reference.

Here are some examples:

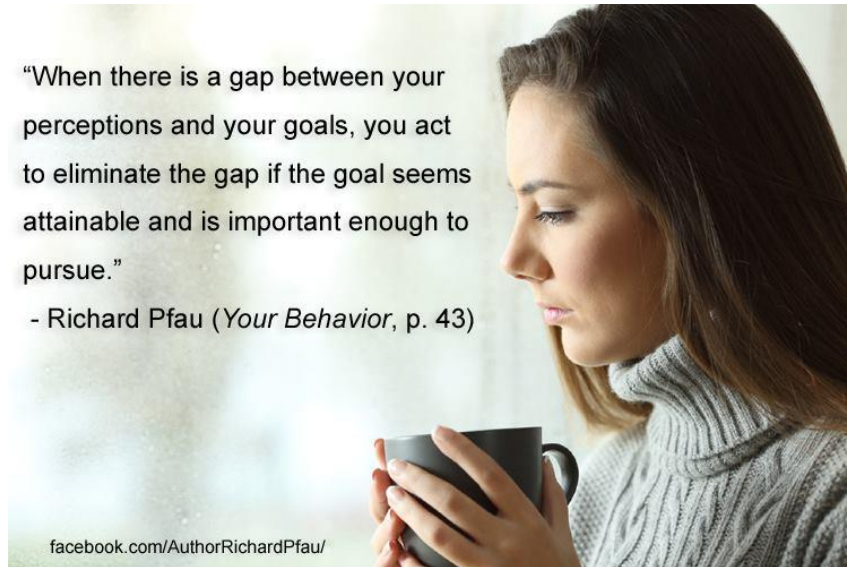
- You are hungry (a perception indicating a difference from your reference of not being hungry). As a result, you look for food and eat until you are satisfied (a perception that matches your reference).
- You want to look good for a job interview (a reference). The clothes that you are wearing are not suitable (a perception resulting in a difference from your reference), so you put on other clothes (your behavior) until you perceive that you are dressed properly (a perception that results in little or no difference from your reference for looking good).
- You see a red traffic light (a perception) while driving and moving toward it (a perception that differs from the legal reference that requires a car to stop in front of a red light). You step on the brake (behavior) until you slow down and stop (resulting in a perception that meets the reference specified by the law).
- You want to see a popular movie (a reference that differs from your perceived present state of not having seen it) so you go and see the movie (these being behaviors that result in perceptions that meet your reference).” - Richard Pfau (Your Behavior, p. 34)

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In other words:

“When there is a gap between your perceptions and your goals, you act to eliminate the gap if the goal seems attainable and is important enough to pursue.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 43)



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Here's an example:

### Highlight 3.10

### Why Do People Spy?

Believe it or not, it's mainly because of MICE!

The intelligence community has an acronym for helping it understand why people spy. It is “**MICE**.” MICE refers to the references of spies that affect what they do. Here's what the letters stand for:

- **M** is for money, to live better, satisfy greed, or deal with debt.
- **I** is for ideology, including political opinions, and cultural or religious beliefs.
- **C** is for coercion, such as blackmail or threats against one's family.
- **E** is for ego and feelings of importance or excitement.

Some people also add an R to form **MICER**, with the last letter being:

- **R** for revenge and grievances toward a workplace, organization, or country.

As you may realize, the intelligence community's thoughts are compatible with PCT and recognition of the importance of a person's references in affecting what they do. People spy mainly to achieve perceptions that match one or more of their reference levels: for money, for their ideological principles, to avoid unpleasant circumstances because of coercive threats, to obtain thrills and boost their egos, and sometimes for revenge.

For more details look at wikipedia.org under the heading “Motives for Spying” and see Herbig and Wiskoff, *Espionage Against the United States*.

- Richard Pfau Ph.D. (*Your Behavior*, p. 44)

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## C. More About Your Body – Feelings, Hormones, and Genes

“Your feelings are often an unrecognized factor that affect a great deal of what you do because they are important to your survival! They are a way of determining, quickly and broadly, what is good for you and what is not.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 44)



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“YOUR FEELINGS ARE A USEFUL GUIDE THAT INFLUENCE WHAT YOU DO. THEY ARE AUTOMATIC, QUICK-ACTING SURVIVAL INDICATORS. HOWEVER, AS GUIDES, YOUR FEELINGS ARE NOT INFALLIBLE. THAT IS WHY CONSCIOUSNESS IS IMPORTANT. CONSCIOUS THOUGHT CAN HELP OVERCOME YOUR INITIAL FEELINGS AND ACTIONS WHEN YOU THINK THEY ARE INAPPROPRIATE.”

- RICHARD PFAU (*YOUR BEHAVIOR*, P. 47)

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### Highlight 3.11 The Feeling of Pleasure and Pain

“The pleasure-pain mechanism serves to motivate the animal’s actions toward those things which its survival requires and away from those things which threaten its survival.”

(Binswanger, *Biological Basis of Teleological Concepts*, 133)

“Humans ... make decisions based on their feelings, and these in turn specify what is, or was, in their best biological interest.”

(Johnston, *Why We Feel*, 179)

“I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness.”

(Lama and Cutler, *The Art of Happiness*, 13)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 45)

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### Hormones and Behavior

“Hormones...affect your behavior indirectly. That is, your hormones do not cause you to do specific things.”



“For example, when you are sick, the hormone Interleukin-1 ... makes you sleepy, changes your threshold of pain regulation so that your body aches, makes you run a temperature, decreases your appetite and sex drive, and generally makes you feel bad.... But the hormone does not cause you to take medicine, or sick leave, or stay at home and rest. It does, however, make such behavior more likely, especially when such behaviors are pre-existing tendencies that you have.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 47-48)

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### Highlight 3.13

### Testosterone and Aggression

“What it [testosterone, a male sex hormone] does is exaggerate pre-existing social tendencies toward aggression. If you want a...metaphor..., testosterone does not turn on some radio playing martial military music. What testosterone does, if and only if the music’s already on, it turns up the volume.... Testosterone is exacerbating, amplifying, increasing the volume of what was already there by social experience.... Testosterone is not causing aggression. It amplifies pre-existing tendencies.”

(Sapolsky, *Biology and Human Behavior*, Part 2, 156-157)

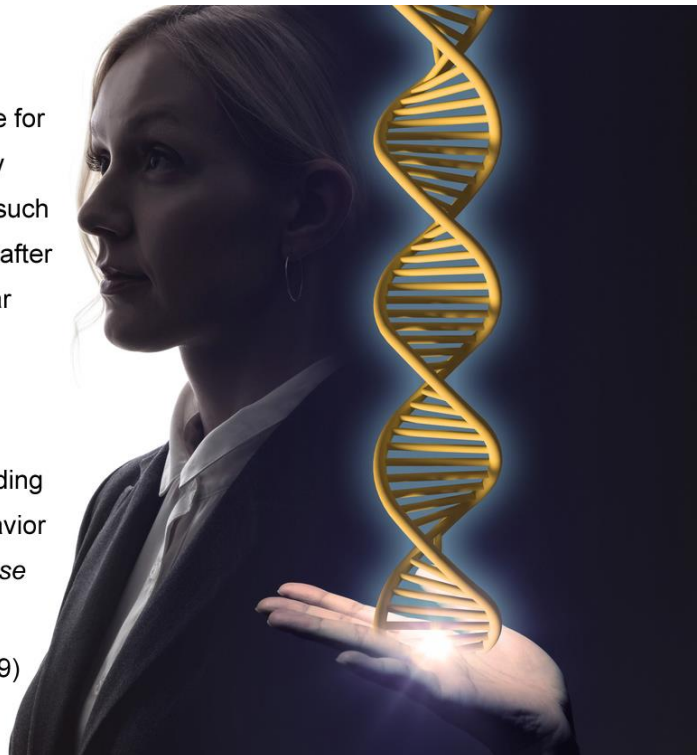
- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 48)

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#### Your Genes and Behavior

Although your genes are largely responsible for the structure of your body, they do not really cause you to do things except...as actions such as coughing, sneezing, or crying as a baby after you were first born. Even though the popular media has reported that genes for many complex behaviors have been found—such as for schizophrenia, bed-wetting, and aggression—such claims are bogus misleading statements.... The effects of genes on behavior are much more indirect... *genes do not cause you to behave in specific ways.*”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 49)



## D. Consciousness

But how about consciousness? Based on your brain's activity, you consciously affect some of your behavior, although you do this relatively rarely in comparison to how your body automatically operates.

### Conscious Thought

"You consciously do things, especially (1) when you are facing a new or unexpected situation, (2) when you are trying to learn a new behavior, (3) when you are trying to improve a skill that you already have, and (4) when you realize that an automatic, habitual, or routine response that you are making (or may make) is not appropriate. Otherwise, most of what you do is done automatically, with little or no conscious thought."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 35)

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## Chapter 4. How You Became the Way You Are

### A. Your Genetic Heritage

As indicated before:

#### Highlight 4.2

#### The Effects of Genes

“We are almost never justified in using the language or concept of a ‘gene for’ a behavior or psychiatric trait. The relationship between genes and behavior is too contingent and indirect for such language to be appropriate.”

(Flint, Greenspan, and Kendler, *How Genes Influence Behavior*, 212)

“Genetic instructions are of great importance to our natures, but they are not destiny.”

(Ehrlich, *Human Natures*, 9)

“Genetic material does not produce finished traits but rather interacts with environmental experience in determining developmental outcomes.”

(Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, “Nature-Nurture Reconceptualized,” 571)

“The fact that we speak English has nothing to do with genetics, but the fact that we can talk does.”

(Gallagher, *The Power of Place*, 218)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 60)

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## B. Learning

### Why Learning is So Important

"Your ability to learn greatly improves your chances for survival.... You have learned to avoid things that may harm you and to do things that help you to live. Learning helps you to maintain your autopoietic [self-producing] being."


"Without the ability to learn, your behavior would be mostly fixed, like that of an insect. You would only be capable of fixed reflexive behavior.... With your ability to learn, your actions are flexible and adaptable to new situations and experience."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 61)



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## Association



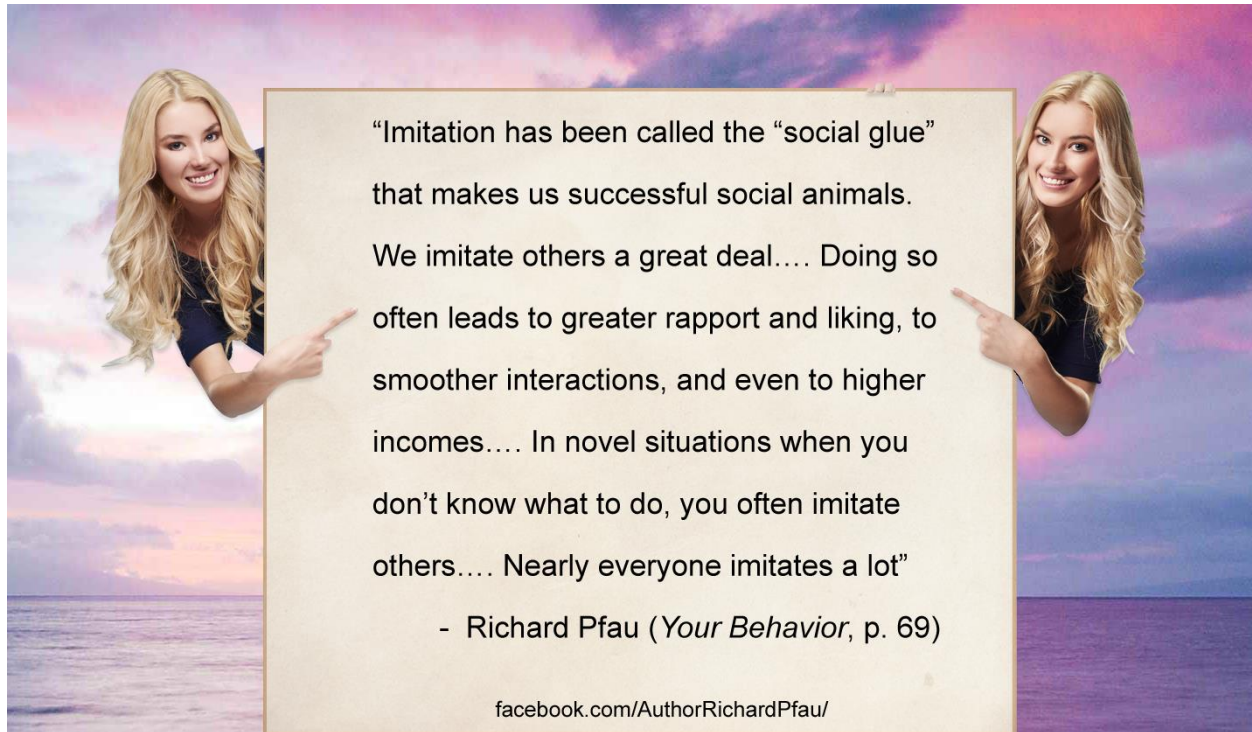
"You routinely and automatically establish associations between things and events that you sense, including between your perceptions and feelings. These associations are learned and affect the way you think and act.

Some associations are learned naturally. Some are a result of trauma. Some are taught. Others are formed and sometimes manipulated by people such as advertisers, politicians, and even con artists. These associations, when formed within you, affect how you perceive things and what you do"

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 66)

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“Imitation has been called the “social glue” that makes us successful social animals. We imitate others a great deal... Doing so often leads to greater rapport and liking, to smoother interactions, and even to higher incomes.... In novel situations when you don’t know what to do, you often imitate others.... Nearly everyone imitates a lot”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 69)

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<b>Highlight 4.8</b>	<b>Observational Learning</b>
<p>“Most human behavior is learned by observation through modeling.”</p> <p>“The people with whom one regularly associates ... delimit the behavioral patterns that will be repeatedly observed and, hence, learned most thoroughly.”</p> <p>(Bandura, <i>Social Foundations of Thought</i>, 47, 55)</p>	
<p>- Richard Pfau (<i>Your Behavior</i>, pg. 70)</p> <p><a href="https://facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/">facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/</a></p>	

### Obtain Feedback If You Want to Improve Your Behavior

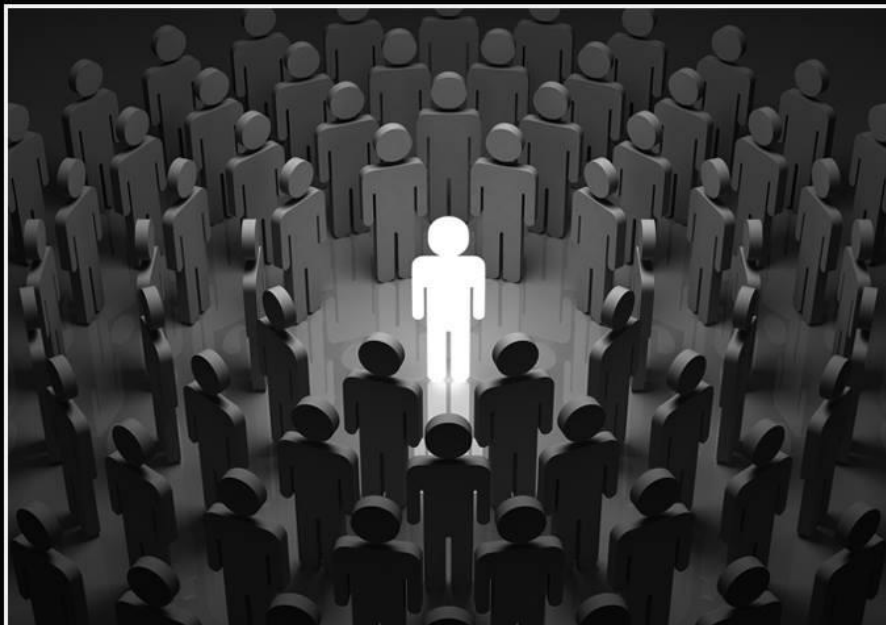
“The old folk sayings, ‘Experience is the best teacher’ and ‘Practice makes perfect,’ express the essence of learning by doing—although some scholars point out that feedback and perception of the results of one’s actions are also needed. That is, if you don’t know the consequences of your actions, if you don’t know how you did, you usually won’t improve what you do.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 71)

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## C. Socialization and “Social Control”

“Most of what you do is a result of how you have been socialized by the people and society around you. Your language, manners, and most normal behaviors that you exhibit are a result of socialization and the influence of others.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 72)



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## Informal “Social Control” Techniques

Informal techniques used by people as they try to influence the behavior of others include:

“A pat on the back, a smile, a kiss, a hug, praise, a compliment, giving recognition of achievement, expression of disappointment or anger from a parent or others, corrections, frowning, glaring or staring at someone, verbal insults, scolding, silent treatment, withdrawal of friendship, ignoring, shunning, avoiding, excluding, rejecting, expulsion, time-outs, an assault, beating, expulsion, ostracism.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 73)



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## “Social Control” Techniques Used by Organizations

“Most of what you do is a result of how you have been socialized by the people and society around you.” Techniques used in organizations include:

“Orientation and training, supervisor verbal feedback, performance appraisals, pay raises, bonuses, public recognition (such as employee of the month awards), incentive programs, employee assistance programs, 360-degree feedback instruments, standard operating procedure manuals, protocols, reprimands, demotion, transfer, termination.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp, 72 & 74)



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## Medical “Social Control” Techniques

Medical techniques used to influence the behavior of people include:

“Drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs, campaigns to reduce smoking, psychological examination, counseling, therapy, psychoanalysis, drug treatments (for ADHD, depression, and other mental disorders), admittance to a mental hospital.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 74)



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## Legal “Social Control” Techniques

Legal techniques used to influence the behavior of people include:

“Laws; penalties provided by the state for violations of criminal, administrative, or civil law, including restraining orders, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (in the UK and Ireland), use of force by the police, fines, home confinement, mandated community service, imprisonment, exile, and death; also rewards, such as tax breaks and deductions.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 74)



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## **A Question: Can we control what other people do?**

Highlight 6.10 (pg. 114) of my book "Your Behavior" states, "It appears that while people can influence one another, they cannot really control what someone else does—at least without producing conflict. This is because what someone does is controlled by their internal structure and organization, not by their outside environment...."

Similarly, according to William Powers: "People control their own experiences. The only way you can truly force them to behave as you wish is through the threat or actuality of overwhelmingly superior physical force...."

And E. Ford writes: "You can't really change another person, only yourself."

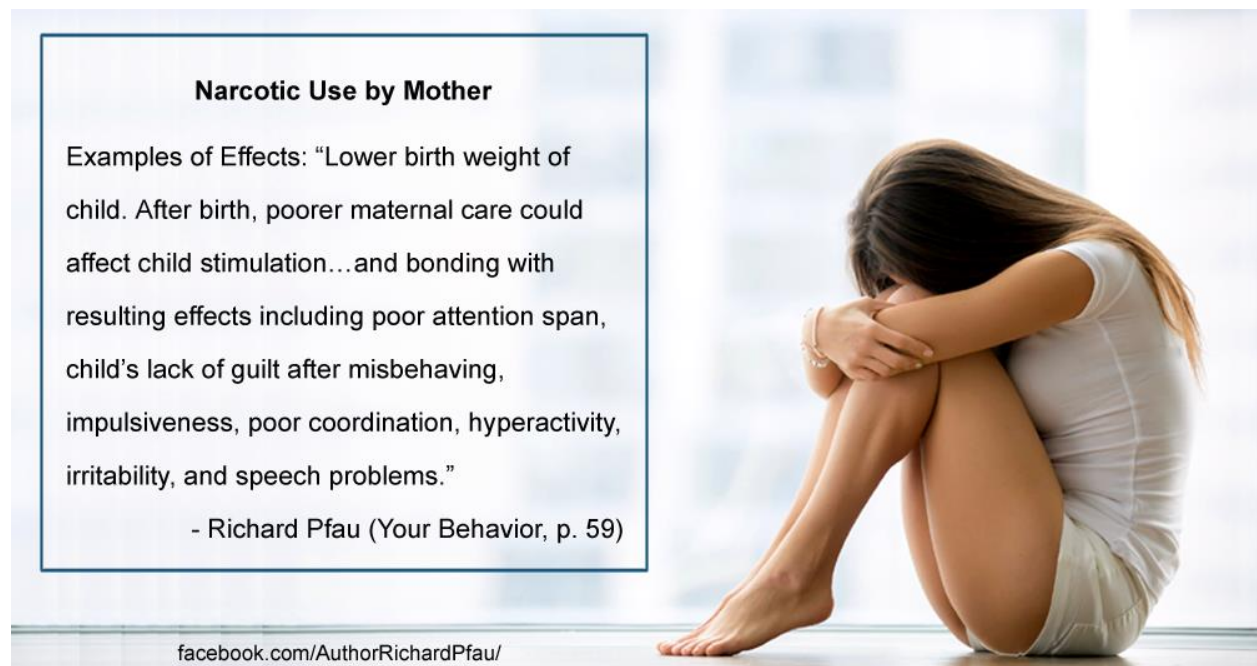
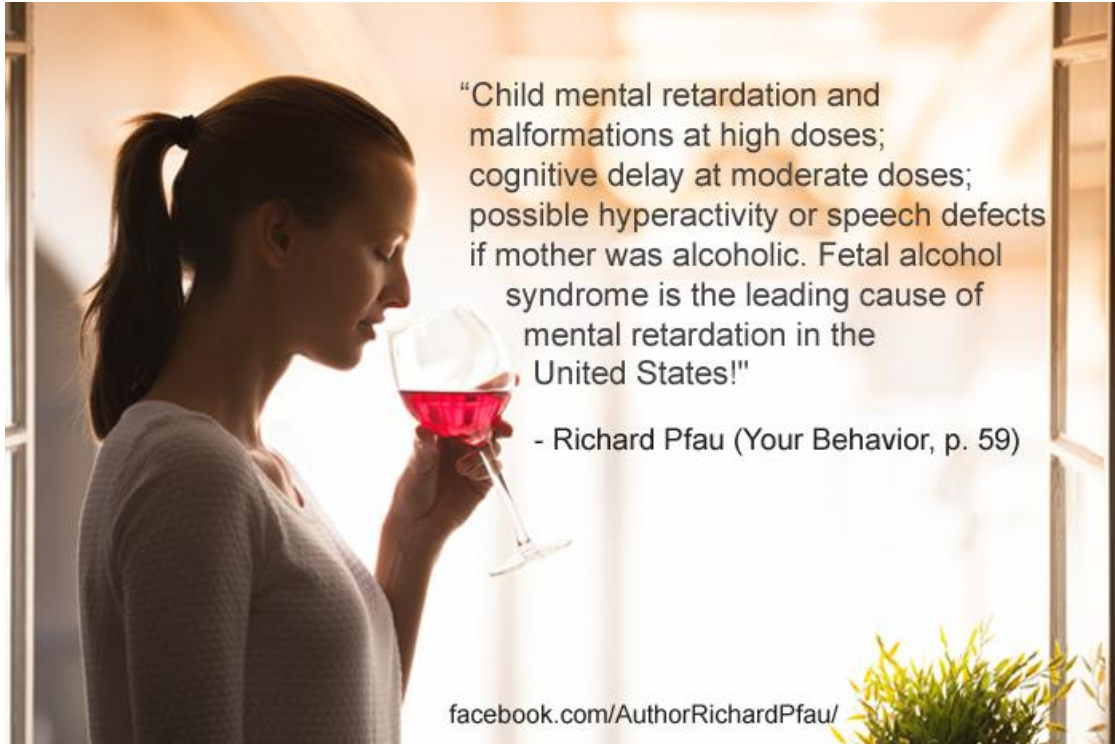
**What do you think?**

**Can we control what other people do or only influence their actions?**

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## D. Examples of Physical Environmental Effects on People's Bodies

Perhaps some of these things have affected you. They certainly affect many other people.



## Highlight 4.11

### Lead Exposure: Another Example of Physical Environmental Effects

The metal lead has been shown to have a number of effects on the human body and behavior. No safe threshold for lead exposure apparently exists. Young children are especially susceptible to lead poisoning since their growing bodies absorb more than adult bodies.

Among other effects, exposure to lead interferes with development of the nervous system. Signs and symptoms in children include irritability, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems such as mental retardation, hyperactivity, poorer attention, lower vocabulary, poorer eye-hand coordination, longer reaction times, decreased arithmetic and reading skills, decreased fine motor skills, and antisocial behavior such as aggression. In adults, depression and anxiety occur as does irritability, poorer attention spans, headaches, muscular tremors, forgetfulness, loss of memory, hallucinations, delirium, malaise, impotence, dizziness, greater levels of conflict in interpersonal relationships, and poorer verbal reasoning, reaction times, hand dexterity, and posture balance.

Most exposure is by ingestion, such as of lead paint by children, and by breathing lead-contaminated dust and (in some countries) lead-gasoline exhaust fumes. Most lead exposure is preventable.

*Major Source:* Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, "Lead: Health Effects."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 75)

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## Chapter 5. How Regular and Routine is Your Behavior?

### A. The Big Picture

#### How Regular and Routine is Your Behavior?



“Regular or routine behavior means generally similar patterns of behavior not behavior that is exactly the same from one time to another. Your regular and routine behavior is not exactly the same..., because you and your environment are not exactly the same over time. So, you adjust what you do. For example, although you may drive to work regularly, your muscles do not move exactly the same way each time, because of the actions of other cars, the effects of wind pushing your car, road conditions, traffic lights, and pedestrians. In other words, your control systems vary your behavior...so that your perceptions more closely match your references.

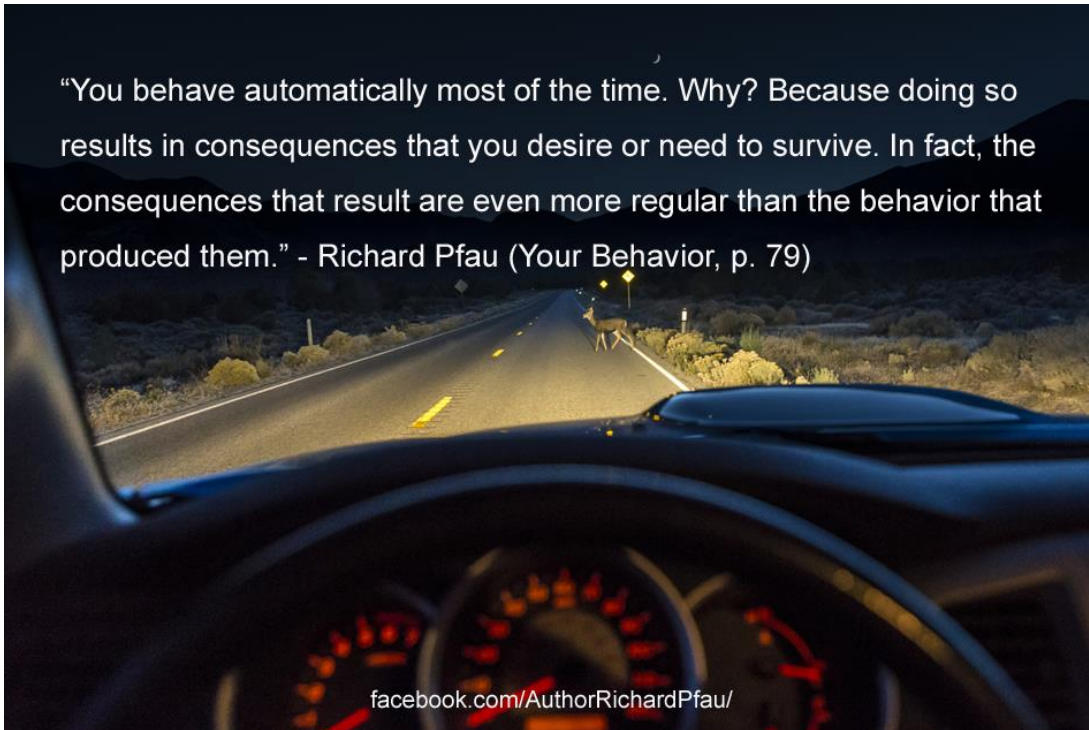
Similarly, although you routinely eat, brush your teeth, and put on clothes every day, the positions and movements of your hand, arms, head, and body are not exactly the same each time. The goals and other references may be similar, but your behavior varies a little in reaching these goals, references, and desired consequences. And if your references change, such as wishing to look nice when going to a wedding, rather than wearing something appropriate to do housework, the clothes you wear will differ, but your overall behavior of wearing clothes will be the same.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 81-82)

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“You behave automatically most of the time. Why? Because doing so results in consequences that you desire or need to survive. In fact, the consequences that result are even more regular than the behavior that produced them.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 79)



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## Highlight 5.2

### Walking: An Example of Behavior that is Routine but Necessarily Flexible

“To take current conditions into account while guiding action toward the intended goal, each movement must be performed a little bit differently. Even highly practiced actions such as walking cannot be a series of rote repetitions with each step exactly like the last because the everyday environment is not like a big gymnasium, with uniform open ground. In real life, paths are cluttered and ground surfaces are infinitely variable. Walking cannot be choreographed or prescribed by a preexisting plan because the everyday environment is not like a fixed obstacle course with all the challenges known ahead of time.”

Source: Adolph et al., “Flexibility,” 399-400.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 82)

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## Everyday Behavior

"Most of the things that you do...are done regularly and routinely.... In fact, if you and others did not behave routinely and predictably in most situations, society would not function well. We would not be able to interact and work together very smoothly. And you would be viewed as a strange, abnormal person."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 83)



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### Highlight 6.17 Habits and Your Environment

"All 'habits' are linked to some kind of environment ..."

(Ford, *Humans as Self-Constructing Living Systems*, 95)

"Habitual responses are likely to occur with minimal thought and effort to the extent that the contextual features integral to performing the response and one's behavioral goals are similar across time and setting."

(Ouellette and Wood, "Habit and Intention," 55)

"Psychologists have been fairly unanimous in adopting a ...conceptualization of habit as learned sequences of acts that become automatic responses to specific situations, which may be functional in obtaining certain goals or end states.... Habits thus comprise a goal-directed type of automaticity, which may be consciously instigated...."

(Verplanken, Aarts, and Knippenberg, "Habit, Information Acquisition," 540)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 125)

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### Highlight 5.3

### Regular Patterns of Behavior

“Most of the time what we do is what we do most of the time.  
Sometimes we do something new.”

(Townsend and Bever, *Sentence Comprehension*, 2)

“Daily life is characterized by repetition. People repeat actions as they fulfill everyday responsibilities at work and at home, interact with others, and entertain themselves. Many everyday activities not only are performed frequently but also are performed in *stable circumstances*--meaning in particular locations, at specific times, in particular moods, and with or without interaction partners.”

(Wood, Tam, and Witt, “Changing Circumstances,” 918)

“The functioning of societies depends upon the presence of patterns for reciprocal behavior between individuals or groups of individuals.”

(Linton, *Study of Man*, 113)

“The efficiency and effectiveness of organisations hinges on workers (role incumbents) exhibiting dependable role behavior.”

(Stone-Romero, Stone, and Sales, “The Influence of Culture,” 331)

“In ordinary, daily life, we find extremely regular patterns of behavior, so regularly repeated that we are astonished and even angry on those rare occasions when they fail.”

(Runkel, *Casting Nets*, 153)

“Even when engaged in creative processes, such as writing papers, speaking spontaneously, or driving to novel destinations, the component acts and movements are routinized responses.”

(Kirsch and Lynn, “Automaticity in Clinical Psychology,” 508)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 84)

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Here are some examples of social norms that influence what you and others do. In other words, you have reference conditions or valued norms about how you should behave, and you behave accordingly so that your perceptions match those reference conditions.

## Highlight 5.5

## Examples of Common Norms that Influence Behavior

**Moral:** help others in distress; don't hurt others; don't steal; love thy neighbor as thyself.

**Reciprocity:** return favors done to us by others; do unto others as they have done unto you.

**Medical Ethics:** do no harm; treat more serious cases first; each patient should be given the fullest possible treatment.

**Codes of Honor:** do not lie, steal, or cheat; keep your promises; be truthful under oath; in some cultures, seek revenge for an offense.

**Fairness:** equal sharing; turn taking; equal pay for equal work; equal justice for all.

**Etiquette:** manners of dress; table manners; greetings; wedding arrangements; behavior at a funeral.

**Adults and Children:** do not hurt children; children should respect adults; respect your parents.

**Work:** don't live off other people—earn your income through work; don't be a rate-buster; follow work instructions given by your boss; fairness/equity of procedures and treatment.

**Conventional:** on which side of the road to drive.

**Other:** tipping for service; standing in line/queuing.

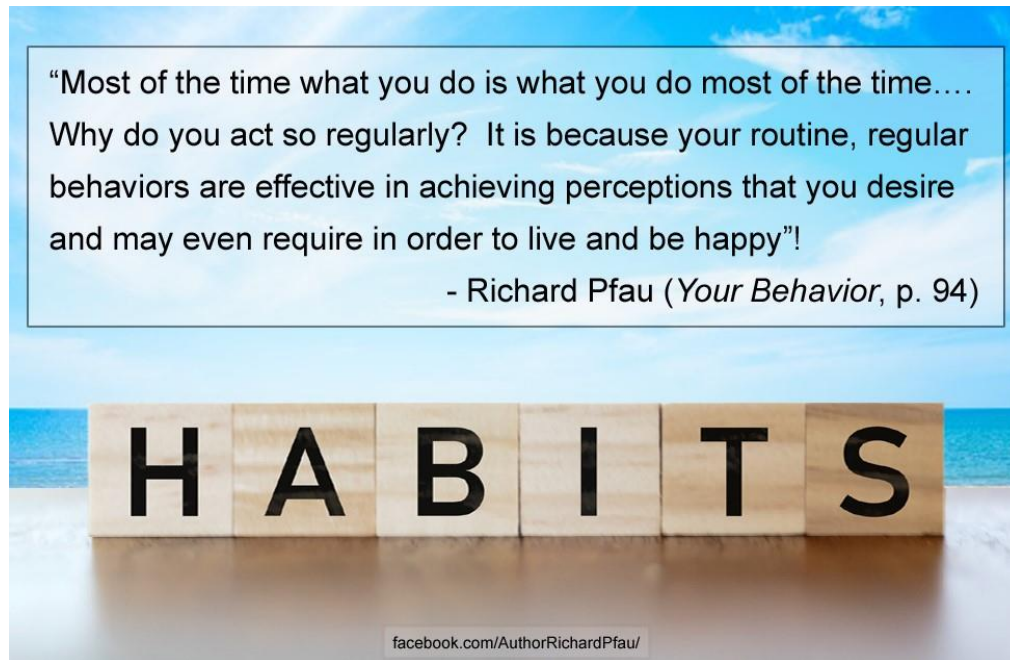
*Sources: Scales et al., Other People's Kids; Elster, Cement of Society and Explaining Social Behavior; Kelley and others, An Atlas; Katz and Kahn, Social Psychology of Organizations.*

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 87)

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## B. When Is Your Behavior More Unique?



However, sometimes you behave differently. Why? Let's see:

### When Is Your Behavior More Unique?

“Your behavior is not always regular and routine. Sometimes you do something quite different. When? There are three major times:

1. When what you are doing isn't producing the results you want,
2. When you face novel situations, and
3. When you are consciously learning to do new things.”

But whether different or routine, what you do can be explained by Perceptual Control Theory. In short, “You do things to control perceptions that matter to you.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 22 & 89)

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## Chapter 6. You and Your Immediate Environment

### A. Environmental Effects on Behavior

<b>Highlight 6.1</b>	<b>Some Environment Variables That Affect Behavior</b>	
• Advertisements	• Laws	• Policies
• Behavior settings	• Machines	• Pollution
• Building design	• Media	• Resources available
• Climate	• Money	• School size
• Consequences	• Music	• Signs and symbols
• Crowding	• Natural disasters	• Smells and odors
• Cues for action	• Noise	• Temperature
• Death of a loved one	• One's job	• Terrorist acts
• Drugs	• Opportunities	• Tools available
• Economic conditions	• Other people	• War
• Holidays	• Physical layout	• Weather
• Information	• Poison ivy	

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 102)

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For instance, “Behavior settings” are places and situations such as your home, streets and sidewalks, school classes, workplaces, stores, churches and temples, funeral services, and sports events. In each of these settings, you behave in fairly routine ways. Similarly, each of the other things mentioned above affect you and what you do.

It has been known for some time that behavior is a function of a person and his or her environment. But people in different cultures often emphasize different things. For example:

## The Fundamental Attribution Error



“Interestingly, in individualistic societies such as the USA, more emphasis tends to be placed on the individual when thinking about what causes behavior, than on his or her external environment.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, people in societies having a group or collective orientation tend to give more recognition to the external environment as a major cause of behavior. For example, when writing about a killer, an American newspaper might describe the person as mentally unstable, having a bad temper, and being a martial arts enthusiast, whereas a Chinese newspaper might indicate the easy availability of guns...and that the person had strained relationships in his life, had recently lost his job, and was following the example of a recent similar slaying elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>”

---

<sup>5</sup> Such tendencies for people to overlook environmental and situational causes of actions and outcomes in favor of personality traits and individual dispositions is called ‘the fundamental attribution error.’ For details see Ross and Nisbett, *The Person and the Situation*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> For evidence supporting these statements see Morris and Peng, ‘Culture and Cause’ and Miller, ‘Culture.’

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 104 and 130 Endnotes)

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Many human-made things in your environment are designed to affect what you do. For instance:

**Highlight 6.6**      **Music and Consumer Behavior**

Music has been shown to affect behavior in many ways. In a liquor store, for example, playing French folk songs has been shown to result in sales of more French wine, and playing German folk songs has been shown to result in sales of more German wine. In a restaurant, diners ate more quickly when fast music was played, and more slowly when slow music was played.


(North, Hargreaves, and McKendrick, "In-Store Music," 132.)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 109)

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Other people around you (your "social environment") are also an extremely important part of your life.

"Your language, manners, roles, the 'normal' behavior you exhibit, and the rituals and customs you follow, have all been affected by the people around you.... You learned those things from others: by imitating them, by their teaching, and as a result of their reactions to what you have done.... Much of your behavior has been molded and shaped by other people." - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p, 110)



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## B. Other Interactions with Your Environment

### Highlight 6.16

### Priming and Aggression

“A considerable number of studies examined the potential effects of violent media exposure on aggression. Overall, this research, whether conducted on violent television, films, music, or video games, consistently found that exposure to violent media is associated with aggressive behavior...” “...media violence can produce short-term increases in aggression by increasing the accessibility of aggressive thoughts, making a person feel angry or hostile, or by increasing the person’s psychological arousal.”

(Swing and Anderson, “Media Violence,” 103)

“Briefly, priming is the process through which activation in the brain’s neural network spreading from the locus representing an external observed stimulus excites another brain node representing aggressive cognitions or behaviors.... These excited nodes then are more likely to influence behavior. The external stimulus can be inherently aggressive, e.g., the sight of a gun..., or something neutral like a radio that has simply been nearby when a violent act was observed.... A provocation that follows a *priming* stimulus is more likely to stimulate aggression as a result of the priming. While this effect is short lived, the primed script, schema, or belief may have been acquired long ago and in a completely different context.”

(Huesmann, “Imitation,” 258)

“When one thought is activated, other thoughts that are strongly connected are also activated. Immediately after a violent film, the viewer is primed to respond aggressively because a network of memories involving aggression is retrieved.”

(Tedescchi and Felson, *Violence*, 114)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 123)

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### Highlight 6.17

### Habits and Your Environment

“All ‘habits’ are linked to some kind of environment ...”

(Ford, *Humans as Self-Constructing Living Systems*, 95)

“Habitual responses are likely to occur with minimal thought and effort to the extent that the contextual features integral to performing the response and one’s behavioral goals are similar across time and setting.”

(Ouellette and Wood, “Habit and Intention,” 55)

“Psychologists have been fairly unanimous in adopting a... conceptualization of habit as learned sequences of acts that become automatic responses to specific situations, which may be functional in obtaining certain goals or end states.... Habits thus comprise a goal-directed type of automaticity, which may be consciously instigated....”

(Verplanken, Aarts, and Knippenberg, “Habit, Information Acquisition,” 540)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 125)

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### Highlight 6.19

### Lack of Iodine: An Example of Environmental Impact

“On a worldwide basis, iodine deficiency is the single most important preventable cause of brain damage.”

“When iodine intake falls below recommended levels, the thyroid may no longer be able to synthesize sufficient amounts of thyroid hormone. The resulting low level of thyroid hormones in the blood...is the principle factor responsible for damage to the developing brain and other harmful effects.... The most critical period is from the second semester of pregnancy to the third year after birth...”

“As a result, the mental ability of ostensibly normal children and adults living in areas of iodine deficiency is reduced compared to what it would be otherwise.

Thus, the potential of a whole community is reduced by iodine deficiency. Where the deficiency is severe, there is little chance of achievement and underdevelopment is perpetuated. Indeed, in an iodine-deficient population, everybody may seem to be slow and rather sleepy. The quality of life is poor, ambition is blunted, and the community becomes trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle.”

(World Health Organization, *Assessment of Iodine Deficiency*,” 1, 6-7)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p.127)

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## C. Environmental Choices and Shaping

You also choose and shape some of your environments. In turn, you are shaped, chosen, and rejected by some of those environments. In other words:

<b>Highlight 6.20</b>	<b>Environmental Selection</b>
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“People actively select and create their own environments. Environments also actively select and ‘create’ their own people.”  
(Moos, *The Human Context*, 398)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 128)

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For example, entrance requirements are one way that colleges, social clubs, and professional associations choose their members.

## Chapter 7. Perception of Your Environment

### A. People's Perceptions Differ

#### Perception of Your Environment



“What you perceive around you may not be similar to others’ perceptions—even when seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, or otherwise sensing the same thing! These differences are often obvious among people of different ages and cultures. For example, a clothing style that looks great to a teenager may look terrible to you, and what you think looks great may not look good to someone else.... Men and women too may see things differently, as discussions between married couples sometimes indicate (Just ask my wife; she certainly sees more dirt around our house than I do!).” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 133)

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How you perceive your environment affects what you do. How others perceive what is around them affects what they do too. Realizing this will help you to better understand why you do the things you do and why others do what they do too. It will also help you understand how and why other people try to manipulate your perception in order to have you do what they want you to do.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 134)

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## B. Your Brain Constructs Reality



**What is Your Environment Really Like?**

“The world as you perceive it, your environment, is a construct of your brain. Colors, sounds, tastes, and smells as well as beautiful and ugly people, good and bad politicians, and the meaning of other objects and events that you sense are all interpretations of what is in your environment, not real aspects of what is around you. The taste of lemonade, for example, only exists in your brain – not in your environment.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 135)

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## Highlight 7.1

## The Zen of Perception

"Thoughts and real things differ in the same way that literary characters differ from living breathing persons. Both are creations of the human mind that have no material existence." "... the entire world as we *know* it is ... an artifact of the mind."  
(Radcliff and Radcliff, *Understanding Zen*, 45, 65)

"The belief that our perceptions are precise and direct is an illusion—a perceptual illusion."  
(Kandel, *In Search of Memory*, 302)

"Perception should not be viewed as a grasping of an external reality, but rather as the specification of one ..."  
(Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, xv)

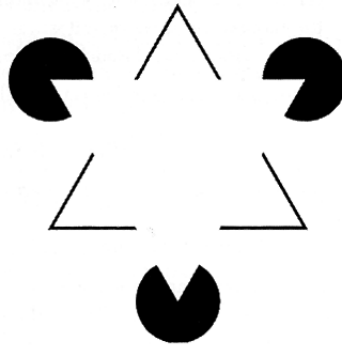
"The world is constructed. The environment contains no information; the environment is as it is' (von Foerster, 1984, p. 263). The world is virtual information; only an observing system produces factual information. Every bit of information is an internal construct (von Foerster, 1999)."  
(Vanderstraeten, "Observing Systems," 302)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 135)

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## Highlight 7.2

## Illusion: An Example of How the Brain Constructs Reality




The brain creates shapes from incomplete data—for example, filling in the missing lines of a triangle. The triangle does not exist physically, but is created by your brain. If you hide some parts of the picture, the triangle vanishes.

*Note:* This illusion is called the Kanizsa triangle and was first described by Gaetano Kanizsa in 1955.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 136)

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“Knowing that what you perceive is a construct of your brain may help you realize that different people often perceive reality differently. As a result of their differing perceptions, they may act differently. Furthermore, you can change how you view the world, to some extent at least—a realization that if acted upon, can change your life for the better”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 137)

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### Highlight 7.6

### An Example of Differing Perceptions

A reindeer when becoming aware of someone’s presence, instead of running away, stands still, turns its head, and looks directly at the person’s face. A Western hunter may perceive the animal as “stupid” for doing this; a biologist may perceive what is happening as an adaptation to predation by wolves. However, a Cree hunter of northeastern Canada, perceives the animal as offering itself to the hunter, “quite intentionally and in a spirit of goodwill or even love toward the hunter.”

(Tim Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 13)

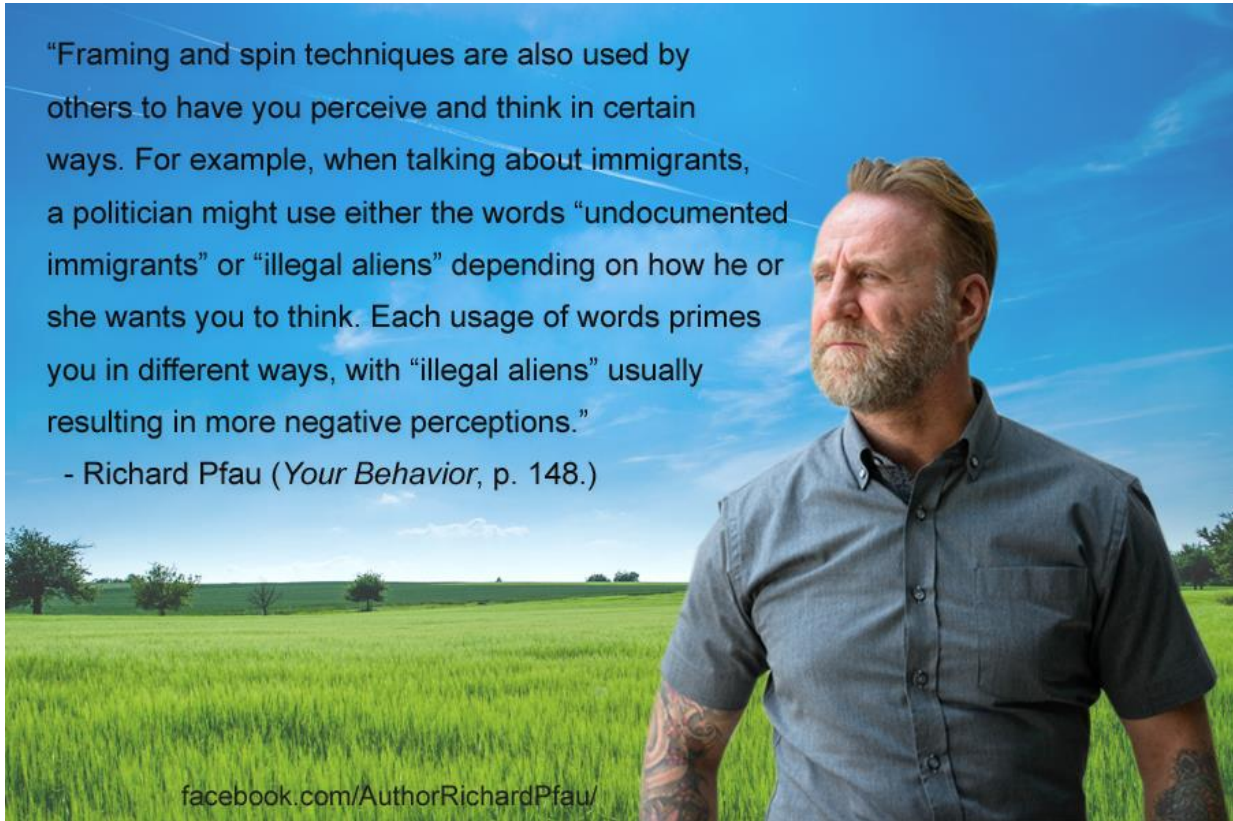
- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 144)

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## C. Framing and Spin Techniques

“Framing and spin techniques are also used by others to have you perceive and think in certain ways. For example, when talking about immigrants, a politician might use either the words “undocumented immigrants” or “illegal aliens” depending on how he or she wants you to think. Each usage of words primes you in different ways, with “illegal aliens” usually resulting in more negative perceptions.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 148.)



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“ ‘Spin’ is a more manipulative use of a frame, often when something embarrassing has happened, to make the occurrence sound normal or good. For example, instead of mentioning that civilians were killed by soldiers, you may hear that some collateral damage’ occurred.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 148.)





## D. More Important Thoughts

<b>Highlight 7.8</b>	<b>Some Important Thoughts About Perception</b>
<p>“Perception depends on attention and expectations—for instance, what you’re expecting to get. ... Perception also depends on a lifetime of prior experience.” (Wang, <i>Neuroscience</i>, 26)</p> <p>“Human perception is skewed toward the features of the world that matter with respect to human needs and interests.” (A. Clark, <i>Being There</i>, 25)</p> <p>“It is not the actual environmental situation that leads to responses, but that situation as perceived by the organism.” (Powers, <i>Behavior: The Control of Perception</i>, 48)</p> <p>“Social behavior and communication requires that there must be common perceptions (meanings) ...” (Burke, “Perceptions of Leadership,” 287)</p>	
<p>- Richard Pfau PhD. (<i>Your Behavior</i>, p 151)</p> <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/">facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/</a></p>	

Besides differences in perception of our environment, at least four other important factors affect what we do. As indicated before, these are:

- Our goals, values, and other reference conditions
- Our capabilities, including our knowledge, skills, and physical abilities
- The environments, contexts, and disturbances that we face
- The feedback that we receive.

## Chapter 8. Your Broader Environment and Its Influence

### A. Introduction

#### Your Broader Environment and Its Influence



“Your broader environment consists of the world that lies beyond what you directly perceive and experience. Popular terms used to describe this more distant environment include your nationality, geographic location, national economic conditions, political system, government, religion, organizations, technology and science, historic and current events, and happenings in other parts of the world.

Your broader environment affects you in many ways that are often not apparent. It does this by influencing your immediate environment and affecting what you experience, learn, do, and can do. For example, the language you speak, the way you dress, what you eat, the TV programs you watch, the wages you earn, and whether you are in jail or not are all affected by what lies beyond the immediate environment that you directly experience.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 157)

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## Highlight 8.2

## Broader Environmental Effects

“What we are is shaped both by the broad systems that govern our lives—wealth and poverty, geography and climate, historical epoch, cultural, political and religious dominance—and by the specific situations we deal with daily. Those forces in turn interact with our basic biology and personality.”

(Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, 298)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 160)

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“Where you live, work, or go to school also affects what you do by limiting or expanding opportunities available to you.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 163)



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## B. Economic Conditions

### Highlight 8.5

### The Truly Disadvantaged

“The concentration of poor people in poor areas increases all kinds of stress, deprivation and difficulty—from increased commuting times for those who have to leave deprived communities to find work elsewhere, to increased risk of traffic accidents, worse schools, poor levels of services, exposure to gang violence, pollution and so on.”

(Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, 163)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 164)

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### Highlight 8.6

### The Economy and Behavior

“As the economy falters, the incidence of admissions to mental hospitals and prisons, child abuse, spouse abuse, suicide, and so forth are dramatically increased ...”

(Dziegielewski and Wodarsk, “Macro-Level Variables,” 261)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 165)

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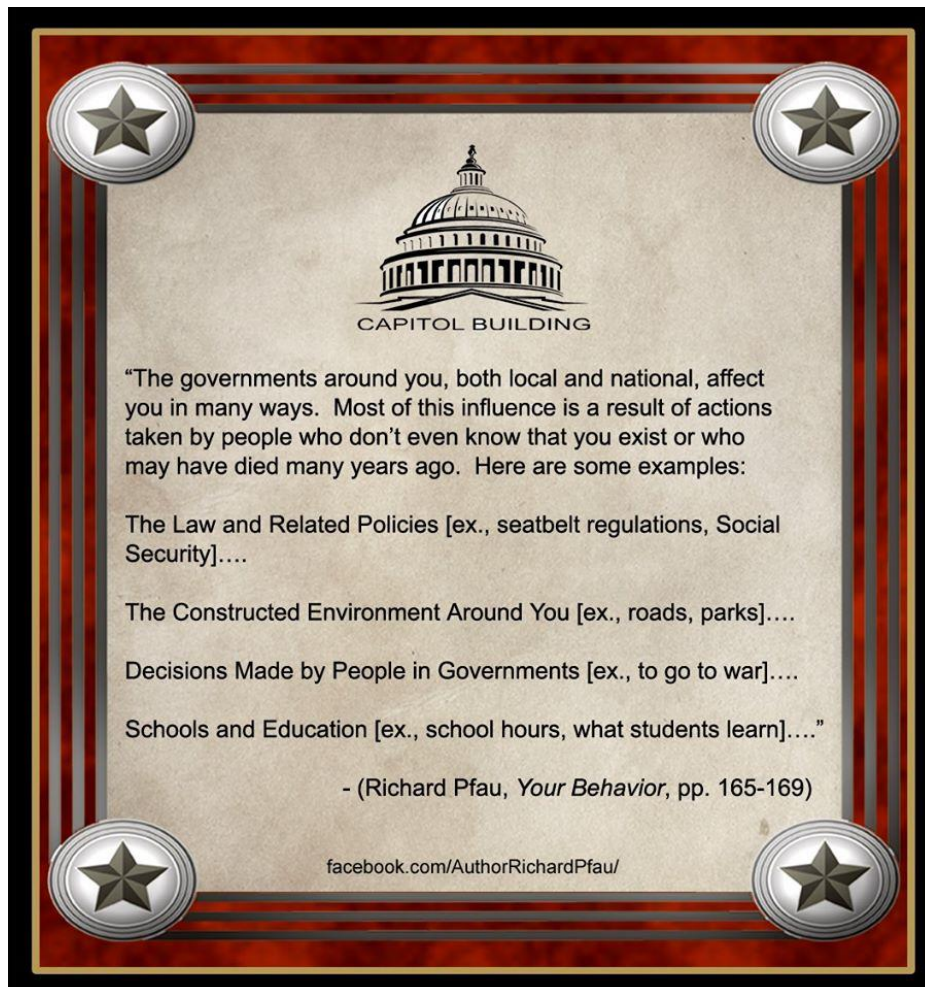
## C. Organizations

"Almost every stage of your life has occurred within an organizational context and still does. You may have been born in a hospital; married in a church, temple, or mosque; been a Boy Scout or Girl Scout; received education at a school; been employed by a business or government; bought food, clothing, and other items in stores; perhaps served in the military;

or had contact with other public and private organizations. If so, aspects of those organizations, such as their goals, policies, and procedures undoubtedly affected what you did, could do, and what happened to you."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 165)

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“The governments around you, both local and national, affect you in many ways. Most of this influence is a result of actions taken by people who don't even know that you exist or who may have died many years ago. Here are some examples:

- The Law and Related Policies [ex., seatbelt regulations, Social Security]....
- The Constructed Environment Around You [ex., roads, parks]....
- Decisions Made by People in Governments [ex., to go to war]....
- Schools and Education [ex., school hours, what students learn]....”

- (Richard Pfau, *Your Behavior*, pp. 165-169)

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## Government Influence on Behavior



“Here are some ...examples that indicate the variety and extent of government influence:

- Government enforcement mechanisms, including police officers, inspectors, courts, and prisons, help ensure that you obey laws that have been established.
- Government policies concerning traffic safety, including safety features on cars, restrictions on teenage driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol, have reduced traffic death rates. Similarly, government bans on smoking in public places have had positive effects in reducing levels of smoking in smokers.
- Higher taxes on alcohol help reduce binge drinking.
- As local, state, and national governments have extended gambling venues and options such as lotteries in search of new revenues, the numbers of pathological gamblers have increased proportionately.
- A California statewide policy bans certain forms of athletic training during unhealthy air conditions. Urban planning in some places also promotes healthful activities such as walking and bicycling to school by building suitable pathways. Warning labels on cigarette packs and public service advertisements about the hazards of smoking are other attempts by governments to influence peoples' behavior and health.
- Maternity and paternity leave in many countries is also controlled by laws. For example, over 125 countries provide job-protected, childbirth-related leave, averaging 16 weeks, including pre-birth and post-birth time off. In the United States, a parent can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave each year. In Sweden, parents are entitled to 390 days of paid leave that they may use up to the child's eighth birthday—leave that they may use as they wish, either monthly, weekly, daily, or even hourly. In addition to newborn leave, many countries also provide child-care services at little or no cost for working parents of infants and children.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 166-67)

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## D. The System

### Highlight 8.7

### “The System” and Behavior

“The System consists of the agents and agencies whose ideology, values, and power create situations and dictate the roles and expectations for approved behaviors of actors within its spheres of influence...”

“‘Bad systems’ create ‘bad situations’ create ‘bad apples’ create ‘bad behaviors,’ even in good people.”

(Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*, 445, 446)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 168)

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## E. News Agencies and the Mass Media

### Breaking News

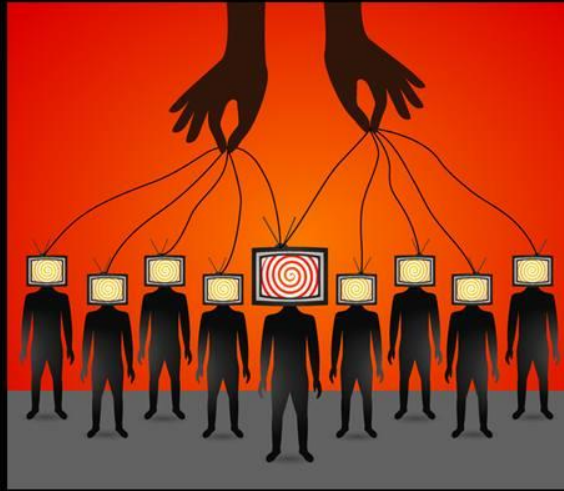


“Profit-making news organizations often sensationalize crime, with the result that they are major producers of fear in the American people. This occurs, in part, since sensationalism attracts attention and is good for the news business, which can then make greater profits through increased sales to advertisers and subscribers. Unfortunately, however, what is emphasized and reported by news agencies affects people’s perceptions of reality. Events unduly emphasized stimulate misperceptions as does a lack of news and information—misperceptions such as the belief held by many Americans that ‘the U.S.A. has the best health care system in the world.’”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 170)

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## The Mass Media



“The mass media and those behind them, including business managers and politicians, have an enormous influence on people’s knowledge, thinking, and behavior. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, billboards, and the internet....affect a great deal of what you and others know and believe about the world.”

“What is presented is selected and interpreted by those producing what we see, hear, or read....”

“For example, what do you know about China? Probably, for the most part, what you have seen, heard, or read on different mass media. And much of this is undoubtedly distorted. Such distortion struck me when President Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. The images broadcast on TV were nothing like those that I had expected, based on previous media exposure, slanted reporting, and Cold War propaganda.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 172 & 173)

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### **Highlight 8.8**    **The Mass Media and Behavior**

“People read newspapers. Despite everything we think we know, their contents seep in, we believe them to be true, and we act upon them, which makes it all the more tragic that their contents are so routinely flawed.”

“Dr. Benjamin Spock ... recommended that babies should sleep on their tummies. ... we now know that this advice is wrong, and ... has led to thousands, and perhaps even tens of thousands, of avoidable cot deaths. The more people are listening to you, the greater the effects of a small error can be.”

“Studies looking at the use of specific health interventions before and after media coverage ... found that favourable publicity was associated with greater use, and unfavourable coverage with lower use.”

(Goldacre, *Bad Science*, 108, 324)

“Q: How many murders has the average [American] child seen on TV by the time he or she finishes elementary school? A: Eight thousand, plus 100,000 other acts of violence ...”

“The evidence overall strongly converges on the conclusion that media violence does have harmful effects, especially on children, primarily in three areas. After exposure to media violence, there is an increase in fear, violent behavior, and desensitization ...”


“Even if media violence is responsible for only 5 to 15% of societal violence ... that is still very important. Because ... even a very small effect of media can be substantial in terms of numbers.”

(R. Harris, *Cognitive Psychology*, 257, 259, 288)

- Richard Pfau Ph.D. (*Your Behavior*, p. 174)

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## F. The Medical System



### The Medical System

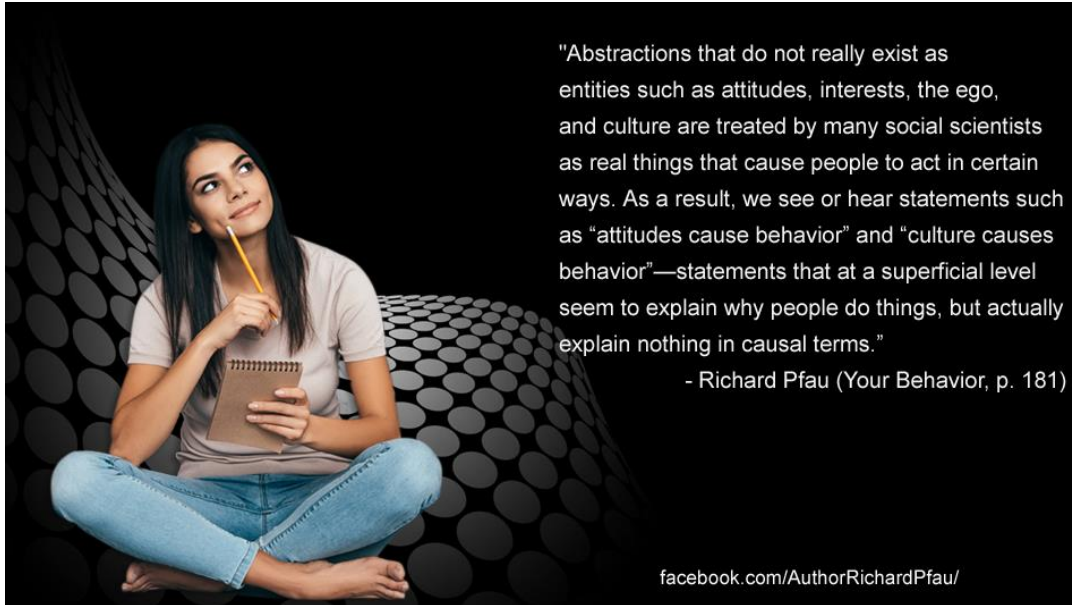
“Problems such as gambling and alcoholism that were once considered moral problems are now considered medical problems, at least in many Western societies. Such deviants tend to be viewed as sick and in need of treatment or rehabilitation. This kind of medicalization of deviant behavior is another broad environmental influence on what people do.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 174)

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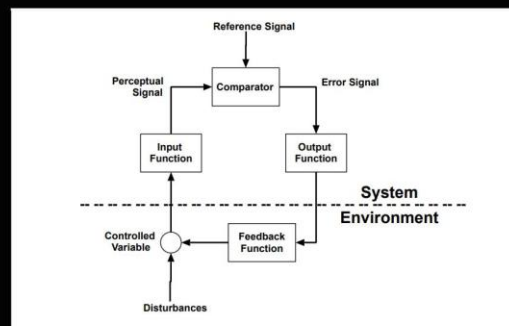
<b>Highlight 8.9</b>	<b>Some Medical Meanings</b>
<p><b>Medicalization</b> “is the process by which personal and social problems are redefined as psychiatric or medical problems.” (Chriss, <i>Social Control</i>, 64)</p> <p><b>Medical social control</b> refers to “the ways in which medicine functions (wittingly or unwittingly) to secure adherence to social norms—specifically, by using medical means to minimize, eliminate, or normalize deviant behavior.” (Conrad and Schneider, <i>Deviance and Medicalization</i>, 242)</p>	
<p>- Richard Pfau (<i>Your Behavior</i>, p. 175)</p> <p><a href="https://facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/">facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/</a></p>	

## Chapter 9. Theories and Models of Human Behavior

### A. Some Important Ideas



### Circular Loop Versus Linear Causation



"Thinking of the present state of psychology and other social sciences, it is clear that much thinking is stuck in the past and uses an input-output model of behavior that is too simple, out-of-date, and based on an illusion of what is actually occurring. Since the 1930s and 1940s a new model has emerged that describes processes basic to the functioning and behavior of all living organisms—a circular model that falls within the technical area of cybernetics."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 36, & 187-188)

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### Circular Causation

“Linear causation is a common view, basic to the physical sciences: X causes Y.... Such thinking is logical. However, when applied to biological systems, it is inappropriate because in living systems, circular, mutual causation occurs. For example, X (your perception) affects Y (your behavior), which affects your environment as well as X (your perception), which then affects Y (your behavior), and the cycle may continue.... For example, when driving a car you may perceive that you are drifting out of your lane (X) and so you turn the steering wheel slightly (Y) and see if you are properly in the lane (X) and if not turn the wheel a little (Y) to adjust your position, see how you are doing (X), hold the wheel steady (Y) if you are properly in your lane, and continue this interactive process as you drive down the road....

Similarly,...you can easily see circular causation occurring between people, for example, during conversations, when two people dance, and when sports games are played.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 188-189)



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## Highlight 9.6

### Psychology and Circular, Closed-Loop, Causation

"Linear dynamic systems behave nicely and can be easily analyzed, and that is why most scientists prefer to see the world in terms of linear systems.... Unfortunately, linear systems are idealizations rarely found in reality."\*

(Bossel, *Systems and Models*, 44)

"The classical cause-effect or input-output model of behavior breaks down when there is feedback from response to stimulus." "...when there is feedback from response to stimulus, such that there is a *closed loop* of cause and effect, conventional explanations which treat stimulus as cause and response as effect are no longer appropriate."

"The move to closed-loop psychology, when it happens, will be like starting psychology all over again, based on a new foundation...."

(Marken, *Mind Readings*, 61; and "You Say You Had a Revolution," 144)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 190)

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## Highlight 9.7

### Human Nature According to Control Theory

"The control-theory version of human nature—or the nature of organisms, for that matter—can be put succinctly. Organisms control. Whatever we see them doing, at whatever level of analysis we prefer, we see them controlling, not reacting.


The old metatheory says that there is a one-way path through the organism, from cause to effect. The final effect is behavior. The new one says that there is a closed loop of action that has neither a beginning nor an end. The old concept says that behavior can be expressed as a function of independent variables in the environment. The new concept says that behavior is varied by the organism in order to control its own inputs. The old concept says that environments shape organisms. The new one says that organisms shape both themselves and their environments."

"According to control theory, it is the nature of human beings to control what happens to themselves as individuals and as a species. They are organized specifically as required to work in this way. That is a new conception of human nature."

(Powers, *Living Control Systems II*, 256-257)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg.191)

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Do Attitudes Cause Behavior?


"Many abstract words are treated as if they really exist. Such words are treated as real things that have certain causal powers.... As a result..., we read or hear statements such as 'attitudes cause behavior' or 'culture causes people to do certain things' — even though such statements are nonsense — treating the abstract word 'attitudes' as a thing that causes behavior or the abstract word 'culture' as another thing that causes people to behave in certain ways.... Symbols of all kinds, including words, signs, and maps are not the things to which they refer!"

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 194-5)

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## B. Perceptual Control Theory – A Major Paradigm Shift

We Control our Perceptions, Not our Behavior



"The idea that we control our perceptions, not our actions, runs counter to the popular views of most people who think about behavior. The traditional view of behavior is that it is the end of a process that starts in the environment or within the body.... The PCT view...is that rather than being a result of input, behavior is your body's way of controlling its sensory inputs to keep them at their reference levels—levels required for you to live or that were otherwise established as preferences since your conception."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 204)

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## Highlight 9.15

## PCT – A Paradigm Shift

“The perspective provided by perceptual control theory...turns the traditional analysis of behavior on its head. Instead of the still-dominant view of seeing stimuli (both past and present) controlling responses (or perceptions controlling behavior, or environment instructing organism), the theory offers the unorthodox view of behavior as controlling perception through the organism’s *control of its environment*.”  
(Cziko, *Without Miracles*, 111)

“It...appears that Powers and perhaps some others influenced by him are the only behavioral scientists who have been able to free themselves completely from the one-way cause-effect trap.”  
(Cziko, *The Things We Do*, 238)

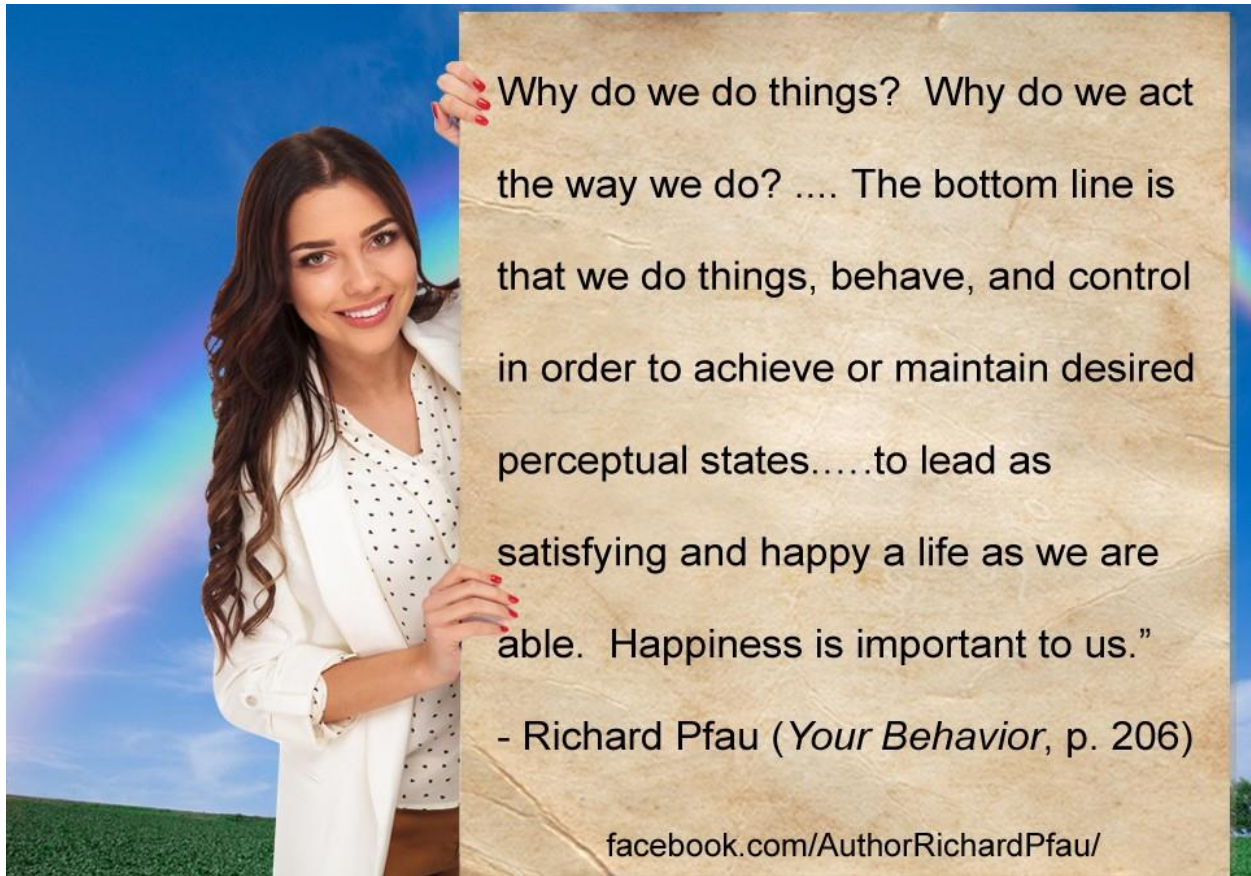
“Science has a social as well as an intellectual aspect. Scientists are not stupid. They can look at an idea and quickly work out where it fits in with existing knowledge and where it doesn’t. And scientists are all too human: when they see that the new idea means their life’s work could end up mostly in the trash-can, their second reaction is simply to think ‘That idea is obviously wrong.’ That relieves the sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach that is the first reaction. Being wrong about something is unpleasant enough; being wrong about something one has worked hard to learn and has believed, taught, written about, and researched, is close to intolerable. All scientists of any talent have had that experience.... But those who recognize and embrace a revolution in science are the exception. Most scientists practice ‘normal science’ within a securely established—and well-defended—paradigm.”

(Powers, “The World According to PCT,” 4)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 205)

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### C. PCT: A Metatheory

**PCT: A Metatheory**

“Perceptual Control Theory is... a ‘metatheory,’ applicable to the behavior of all organisms from bacteria to humans.... Such a role is important since, as Arthur W. Staats writes when discussing the disunity of psychology and its hundreds of different separate theories, ‘Broad overarching theories... should be called on to address such problems.’ PCT is such a broad overarching theory!”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp.206 & 209)

A close-up photograph of a brass keyhole on a white door. A brass key is inserted into the keyhole, and the key's bow is visible on the left side. The keyhole is set in a white door with a silver-colored metal plate around it.

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## Highlight 9.18

## The Accuracy of Prediction

“Once you know that the system is controlling a particular variable, you can predict its behavior with great accuracy.”

(Marken, “Controlled Variables,” 262)

“A crucial test of understanding is the ability or lack of ability to predict.”

(Dawes, *House of Cards*, 77)

“If the behavior of a model does not match the behavior of the person within an error of a fraction of one percent, then the model should be improved or the theory should be given up.... PCT has at last enabled that kind of model to be built.”

(Runkel, *People as Living Things*, 101)

“The correlations between the predictions of the [PCT] theoretical model and the individual’s behavior...are consistently in excess of  $r = .955$ . That evidence persuades me of the merits of this model of purposive individual behavior as a basis upon which to proceed to develop a model of purposive social behavior.”

(McPhail, *Myth of the Madding Crowd*, 205)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pg. 210)

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## Explaining Behavior

Perceptual Control Theory (PCT)

“allows one to explain phenomena as simple as moving a finger or blinking an eye, to matters as complex as going to church, honesty, and composing a song.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 210-211)

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For example, here is an explanation of stress based on Perceptual Control Theory:



Stress is created by differences between our perceptions of the world and related reference values we have for those perceptions. Error signals produced by those differences result in automatic reactions of our bodies, including secretion of the hormones cortisol and epinephrine that result in what is called the stress response.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 296)

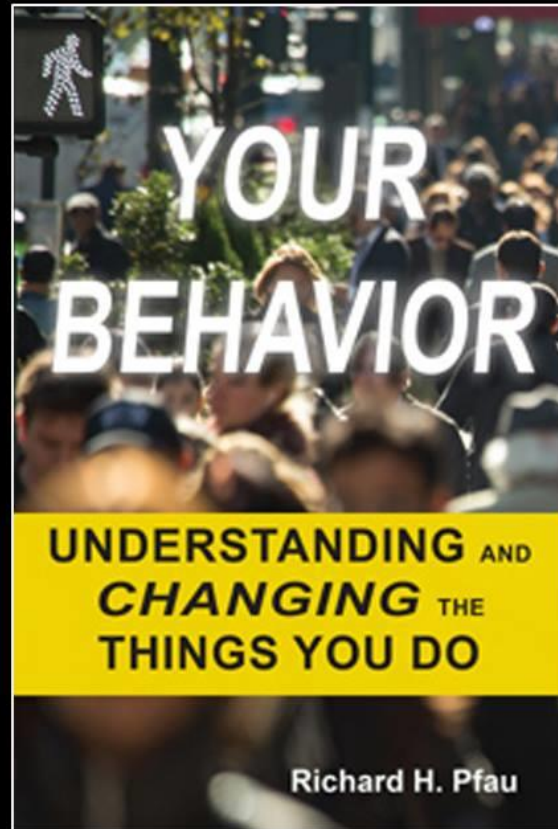
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Because it meets the criteria of good theory so well, Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) has been used in *Your Behavior* to help you understand why you do the things you do. As Peter Lipton has written in the *Oxford Handbook of Causation* (2009, p. 629), “Better explanations explain more types of phenomena, explain them with greater precision, provide more information about underlying causal mechanisms, unify apparently disparate phenomena, or simplify our overall picture of the world.” PCT does these things quite well—as Chapter 9 of *Your Behavior* indicates.

Available on Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1557789274>

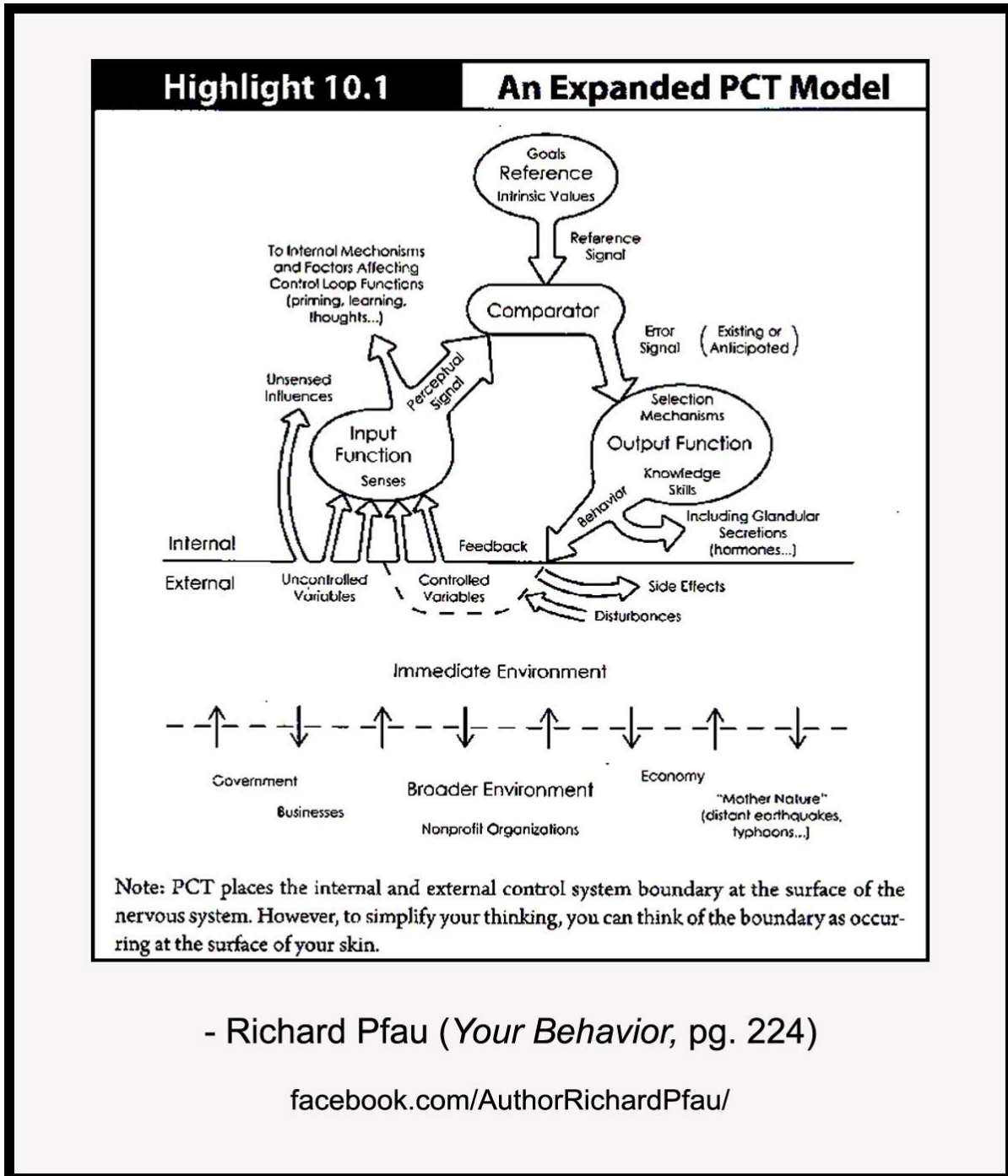


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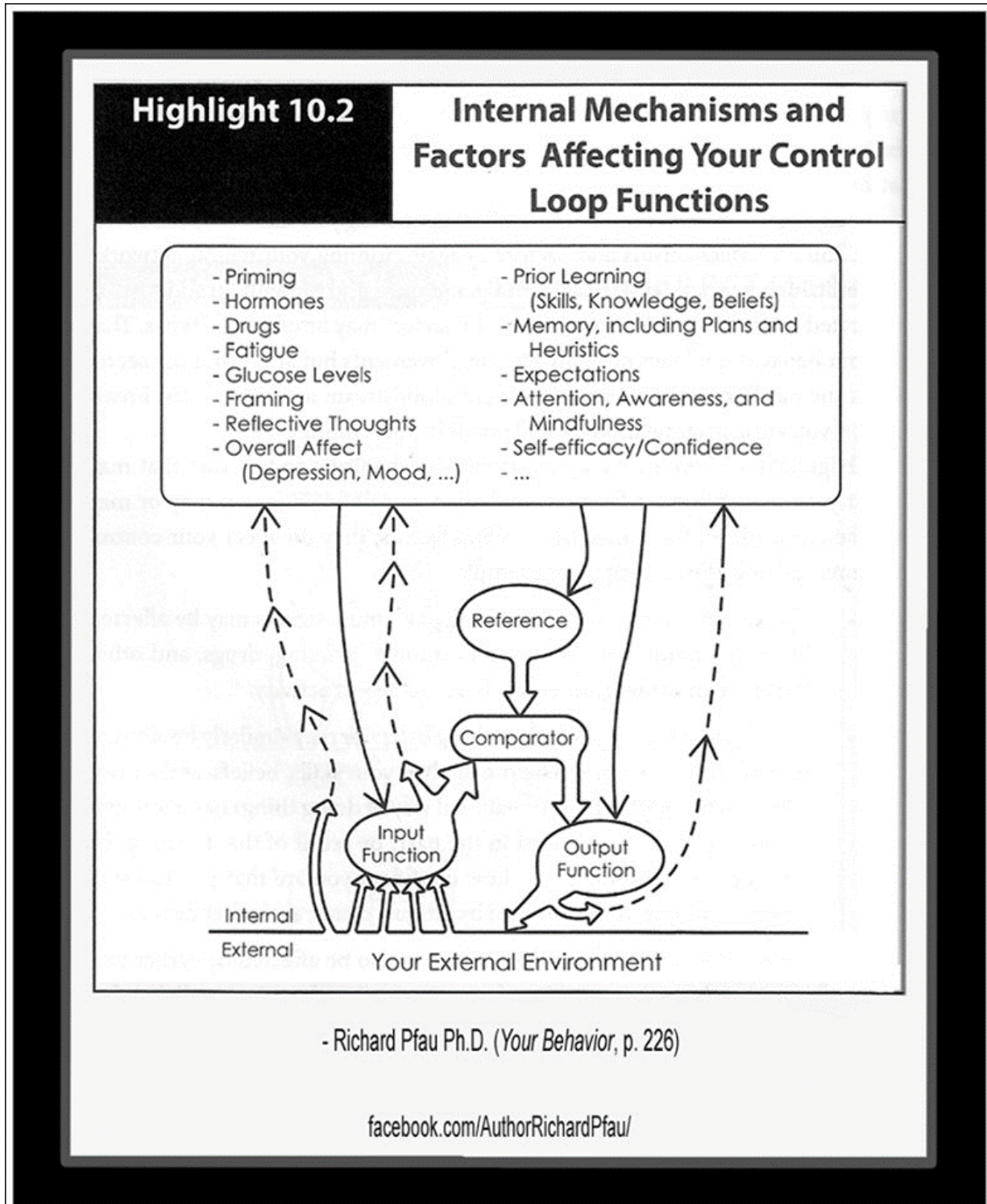
# Chapter 10. How to Analyze Your Behavior

## A. An Expanded PCT Model

An expanded version of the basic Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) model is shown below. Chapter 10 of the book *Your Behavior* explains how you can use it to (a) analyze your own behavior and (b) better understand the behavior of other people.



A “Controlled variable” in the previous diagram refers to a target in your environment that you are trying to manage so that what you perceive matches your reference condition (i.e., your goal, objective, desire...). “Disturbances” refer to other things in the environment besides your behavior that are affecting the controlled variable.





## B. Understanding and Analyzing Behavior

### Highlight 10.4

### Understanding Behavior

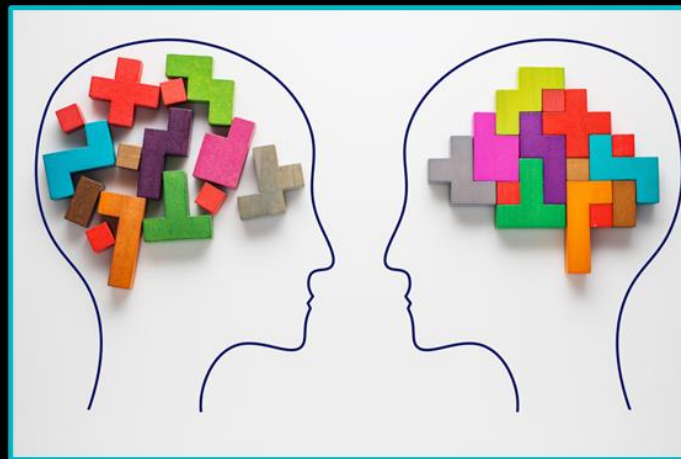
“Understanding behavior means knowing what perceptions are being controlled, how they are being controlled, and why.”

(Powers and others, *Perceptual Control Theory: A Model*, 7)

- Richard Pfau PhD. (*Your Behavior*, p 244)

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### Analyzing Behavior




"The major difference between analyzing your own behavior and analyzing someone else's is that you are privy to your own internal self—your thoughts, feelings, memories, intentions, many of your references, and perceptions.... When it comes to someone else, you know none of these things unless you talk with the person or are intimately acquainted with him or her. Even then, some of the information you obtain or infer may be spotty or misrepresented." - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 246)

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## Chapter 11. Lessons Learned: How to Change Your Behavior

### A. A General Approach for Changing Your Behavior



**“Whether you change your behavior or not is up to you. No one else can do it for you.”**

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 254)

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**To change your behavior:** “Effective techniques include setting goals for yourself, monitoring what you do, ensuring that you can do what you need to do, and changing your environment. Resources that you may use to help you along include your family, friends, self-help groups, and even, at times, a little extra glucose in your system.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 249)

## Changing Your Behavior

*“What you need to do will depend on the kind of behavior you wish to change.”*



Do you want to:

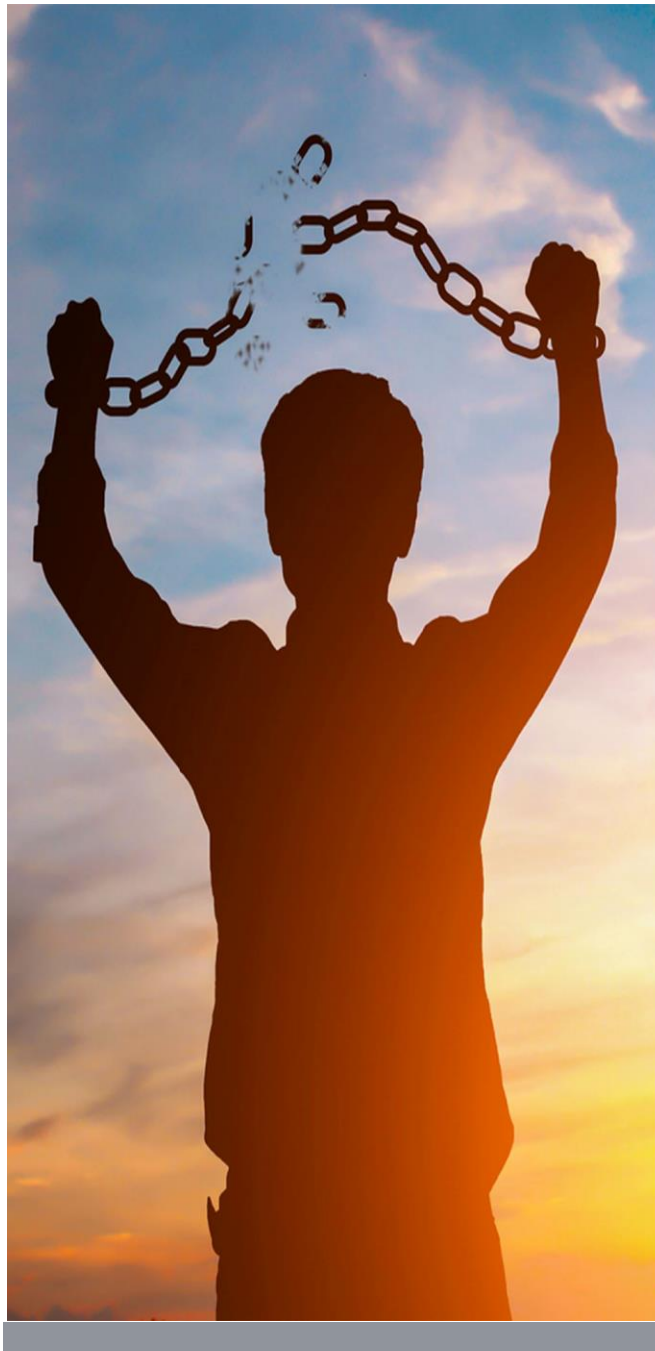
- **Stop doing something you are now doing**, such as a habit like smoking, drinking alcohol, or gambling? To do so, you will need to develop new habits, change your environment, and make plans such as how to deal with temptations, relapses, and difficult situations you may face.
- **Improve the way you do something now**, such as improving your work performance, social skills, or sports skills? This will involve learning to do things better, including lots of practice with feedback, and changing your environment to support your improved behavior.
- **Start doing something new**, such as learn a new skill or obtain a new job? If so, your focus will be on activities that will help you learn that new behavior or achieve that new outcome. Especially for new skills, you will usually need to practice the behavior involved. You may also need to change your environment...such as providing yourself with useful resources like a teacher, instructional materials, equipment, tools, and time.
- **Resist influences from others** that affect what you do? You will be required, in part, to change how you perceive things by becoming more aware of how and when others influence you.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 254-255)

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Would you like to change your behavior? The Behavior Change Checklist shown below may be of help. To read it more clearly and possibly use it, you can download a PDF version from here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317083366\\_Behavior\\_Change\\_Checklist](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317083366_Behavior_Change_Checklist). The checklist is from my book *Your Behavior* (2017) which contains more information about each item if needed.



**BEHAVIOR CHANGE CHECKLIST**  
(FROM "YOUR BEHAVIOR" BY PFAU, 2017)

COPY AND USE THIS CHECKLIST TO RECORD YOUR PROGRESS AND REMIND YOURSELF WHAT TO DO.

**STEP 1: DECIDE TO CHANGE AND MENTALLY COMMIT YOURSELF TO DOING SO**

- CONSIDER WHY YOU ARE DISSATISFIED.
- CLARIFY TO YOURSELF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO DIFFERENTLY.
- COMMIT YOURSELF TO DOING WHAT IS REQUIRED.

**STEP 2: DECIDE ON A GENERAL GOAL TO ACHIEVE.**

- MY GENERAL GOAL IS TO \_\_\_\_\_

**STEP 3: GATHER INFORMATION.**

- OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF, SITUATIONS, AND PEOPLE RELATED TO YOUR GOAL.
- OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT HOW OTHERS HAVE DEALT WITH SIMILAR BEHAVIOR CHANGE.

**STEP 4: CLARIFY YOUR GOAL.**

- YOUR GOAL SHOULD BE SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ATTAINABLE, RELEVANT, AND TIME BOUND.

**STEP 5: CREATE A PLAN TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL.**

- SPECIFY THE BEHAVIORS INVOLVED.
- DECIDE HOW YOU WILL MONITOR PROGRESS.
- DECIDE WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES YOU NEED TO MAKE.
- CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL AVOID TEMPTATIONS AND OTHER UNDESIRABLE TRIGGERS.
- DEVELOP "IF-THEN PLANS" TO DEAL WITH THREATENING AND OPPORTUNE SITUATIONS.
- PREPARE TO DEAL WITH SLIPS, ERRORS, AND LAPSES.
- CONSIDER USING SUPPORT PERSONS AND GROUPS.
- CONSIDER USING TECHNOLOGY.
- ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, COMMITMENT, AND RESOURCES NEEDED.
- CONSIDER USING A PUBLIC CONTRACT AND PENALTIES, SUCH AS STICKK.
- PLAN TO REWARD YOURSELF ALONG THE WAY.
- WRITE DOWN YOUR PLAN (PERHAPS BY USING THE "PLANNING GUIDE FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE").
- SPECIFY YOUR STARTING DATE.

**STEP 6: CARRY OUT YOUR PLAN.**

- PERFORM THE BEHAVIORS INVOLVED:
- AVOID WILLPOWER DEPLETION BY HAVING ENOUGH SLEEP, GOOD NUTRITION, AND NOT TOO MANY GOALS AND TARGETS AT ONE TIME.
- BUILD HABITS.
- BE SURE TO MONITOR PROGRESS TOWARD YOUR GOAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR PLAN.
- MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES THAT ARE NEEDED.
- AVOID TEMPTATIONS AND OTHER UNDESIRABLE TRIGGERS.
- CARRY OUT YOUR IF-THEN PLANS TO DEAL WITH THREATENING AND OPPORTUNE SITUATIONS.
- DEAL WITH SLIPS, ERRORS, AND LAPSES.
- USE YOUR SUPPORT PERSONS AND GROUPS.
- ACCESS AND USE TECHNOLOGY, IF APPROPRIATE.
- DEVELOP THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, RESOURCES, AND COMMITMENT NEEDED.
- REWARD YOURSELF ALONG THE WAY.

**STEP 7: PERSEVERE AND REVISE YOUR PLAN AS NEEDED.**

- EXPECT AND DEAL WITH LAPSES, MISTAKES, AND FAILURES.
- BE FLEXIBLE; REVISE YOUR PLAN WHEN NEEDED.
- IF WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS NOT SUCCEEDING, USE A STEPPED APPROACH.

**STEP 8: MAINTAIN YOUR GAINS.**

- MAINTAIN YOUR CHANGED BEHAVIOR AND DESIRED OUTCOMES.
- CONSIDER YOUR ACTIONS A LIFESTYLE CHANGE, OR
- STOP IF YOUR GOAL IS A ONETIME EVENT.

**“Changing your habits may be difficult since they usually occur automatically without conscious thought. Changing those behaviors must produce perceptions that are more or equally desirable and probably requires a change of the environment that triggers those perceptions, behavior, and habits.”**

**- Richard Pfau ("Your Behavior", p. 253)**



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## Highlight 11.2

### A Few Noteworthy Quotes About Behavior Change

“People do not fail at self-modification because the techniques don’t work; they fail because they don’t use the techniques.”

“To increase your chances of success,  
Use the techniques,  
Use as many as you can, and  
Use them long enough to have an effect.”

(Watson and Tharp, *Self-Directed Behavior*, 9th ed., 22)

“Change isn’t an event; it’s a process.”

(Heath and Heath, *SWITCH*, 253)

- Richard Pfau PhD. (*Your Behavior*, p 256)

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### Highlight 11.3

### Some Common Goals Involving Behavior Change

achieve financial security	lose weight
adopt a low-salt diet	manage diabetes
anger control	manage medication regimen
be a better parent	overcome alcohol addiction
become more assertive	overcome anxiety
change cholesterol levels	overcome depression
control nervous habits (such as nail biting)	overcome drug addiction
date more	reduce blood pressure
deal with post-traumatic stress disorder	reduce conflicts with co-workers
eat less junk food	reduce fear (such as of speaking in public)
eliminate teeth grinding	reduce panic attacks
exercise more/increase physical activity	reduce procrastination
find a job	reduce stress levels
handle anxiety in social situations	sleep better/reduce insomnia
improve one's marriage	stop gambling
improve sport performance	stop smoking
improve test-taking skills	study more effectively

*Major Sources: Watson and Tharp, *Self-Directed Behavior*, 9th ed.; Leutzinger and Harris, *Why and How People Change*; Gatz, Smyer, and DiGilio, "Psychology's Contribution."*

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 258)

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## Highlight 11.4

## Goals: Some Notable Quotes

“A goal without a plan is just a wish!”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French writer, 1900-1944)

“Setting measurable goals provides a ‘yardstick’ against which to chart progress and affirms your commitment to achievement.”

“Take it one day at a time — Seeing a change as something you are going to do for the **rest of your life** is overwhelming. Seeing the change as a series of day-by-day steps makes it easier to accept and comprehend.”

(Leutzinger and Harris, *Why and How People Change*, 8)

- Richard Pfau PhD. (*Your Behavior*, p 261)

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Besides setting goals, monitoring progress toward them is one of the most important things people can do to change their behavior.... Set up a way to monitor your progress, such as count each time you do or don't do something, measure important variables, or keep a diary. Then compare the results with the goal or sub-goal to which they are relevant .... Without feedback, you will act blindly and probably fail in what you trying to do”.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp, 263 & 265)



"Changing your environment is important, especially if you are eliminating a habit or starting a new one, because your habits are closely linked to your environment. Aspects of your environment tend to trigger your habitual behaviors. And so, if you wish to stop a habit, you will probably need to deal with those triggers."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 265)



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### Develop "If-Then" Plans (A Tip for Changing Your Behavior)

"You are bound to be faced with an unavoidable trigger, temptation, or other situation that threatens to interfere with what you are trying to change. This is natural. However, there are ways to deal with such occasions. The best way is to plan beforehand what you will do when you face such a situation. That is, make an "if-then" plan to guide what you do.



These plans take the form that "if" you perceive a certain situation, "then" you will take a certain action. For example, when trying to control your weight, you may decide in advance that "if" you end up at a buffet, "then" you will take only one plate of modestly portioned food. Or when eating at a friend's house, "if" you are offered a second helping of food, "then" you will say, "No thank you. I took enough the first time". Similarly, in case you are trying to control your angry outbursts, you may decide that "if" you perceive you are getting upset, "then" you will "take 10 deep breathes" or "if" you have time, you will "sleep upon the matter" before taking action."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 269)

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## When Changing Behavior, Prepare to Deal with Slips, Errors, and Lapses



If you are trying to change anything but a simple behavior, you may have setbacks and make mistakes. The way to respond is to use them as learning opportunities. Think about why the relapse or mistake occurred, learn from the experience, and try to avoid doing it again. One good if-then plan that you should have is that “if” I have a lapse, “then” I will try to learn from what happened and continue striving toward my goal. - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 270-271)

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### Highlight 11.9

### Other Notable Quotes About Slips and Mistakes

“Behavior change is ... a process of slipping, learning from the mistake, and trying again.”

“With the help of a good plan for coping with slips, ... you can make a mistake without derailing your entire goal.”

(Norcross, *Changeology*, 152,154)

“Mistakes are simply feedback about the need for more practice.”

(Watson and Tharp, *Self-Directed Behavior*, 9th ed., 41)

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 271)

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## How to Change Important Behavior

“You are encouraged to consider using the following “stepped approach.”



- 1) First, try to change or control your behavior yourself .... If that is not sufficient, go to Step 2.
- 2) Use self-help groups and/or materials. If that does not seem to do the job, go to Step 3.
- 3) Obtain Professional help.” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 272)

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### Highlight 11.11

### stickK: An Approach to Precommitment

The stickK approach is a way to help you to make a commitment and stick to that commitment. The approach involves going online and making a Commitment Contract by (1) stating a goal or mini-goal that you want to achieve, (2) stating an amount of money, if any, you will pay to a friend, foe, charity, or an organization that you detest if you do not achieve your goal, (3) designate a referee to confirm the accuracy of your reports to stickK, and (4) indicate the e-mail addresses of supporters you may choose, if any, to help cheer you on.

Although you do not have to put money on the line, research has shown that the commitment and success rate of those who do is much higher than those who do not. Also, although you can self-referee as a part of (3) above, your commitment and chances of success will be higher if you have someone else do so.

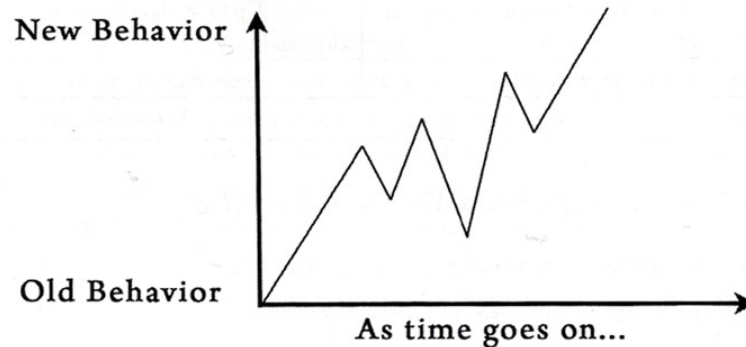
I used stickK to help me successfully complete a draft of this chapter. You too can use it to help you achieve your goals. To start, simply go online to [www.stickK.com](http://www.stickK.com).

## How to Change your Behavior

<b>Highlight 11.13</b>	<b>A Timeline for Long-term Success</b>	
Step 1: Decide to change and commit yourself to doing so. Step 2: Decide on a general goal to achieve. Step 3: Gather information. Step 4: Clarify your goal. Step 5: Make a plan to achieve your goal.	7 to 21 days	
Step 6: Carry out your plan. Step 7: Persevere and revise your plan as needed.	Up to 90 days or more	
Step 8: Maintain your gains.	From day 90 onwards	
<i>Note: This timeline is similar to one suggested by Norcross, <i>Changeology</i>, 36.</i>		

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 279)

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**Highlight 11.14****A Common Pattern of Behavior Change**

Source: Based on Michie et al., *Improving Health*.

“Lapses and other setbacks are to be expected. Many people have them when trying to change their behavior.... The main idea is to be flexible. If something is not working, change your plan in order to do better.... As the old saying goes, ‘If you don’t succeed at first, try, try, again’—and learn from your experience!”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 279-80)

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## Highlight 11.15

## Perseverance and Success: Some Notable Quotes

“I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.”  
(Michael Jordan)

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”  
(Winston Churchill)

“Success does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a second time.”  
(George Bernard Shaw)

“And will you succeed? Yes indeed, yes indeed! Ninety-eight and three-quarters percent guaranteed!”  
(Dr. Seuss)

Sources: [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic\\_success.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_success.html) and <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/success>, April 18, 2013.

- Richard Pfau PhD. (*Your Behavior*, p 281)

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## B. Additional Resources Available to Help You Change

### Self-Help and Support Groups

If you are interested in changing your behavior and need help, look online to locate relevant self-help and support groups, resources, and materials. Just search using a keyword related to your interest and “self-help” or “support group.”



Such groups consist of people who share a problem or goal and come together or chat online to help one another. You may be surprised at how many different groups there are. For example, one source lists 30 dealing with abuse, as well as addictions (77 groups), disabilities (92 groups), family and parenting (76 groups), health conditions (more than 400), mental health (57 groups), and others too ranging from procrastination to public speaking and leadership.

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 282-86)

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“Local self-help groups consist of people who share a problem, predicament, or goal and come together to help one another. Instead of self-help groups, they might better be called “mutual help” or “mutual support groups,” since group members help one another....



If you are interested in changing your behavior and need help, look online to locate relevant groups and materials....using keywords relevant to your interest” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 285)

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## Self-Help Books

"Bookstores are filled with shelves of self-help books. However, be careful. Some books are based on scientific findings and have been shown to be effective. Others are only based on the assumptions, ideas, and opinions of their authors...."

And so, what to do? If you wish to buy a self-help book, here are some suggestions:

- \* *Don't buy a book that lacks references or a bibliography in the back.*  
It indicates that the author did not consider and cite research evidence available.
- \* *Don't buy a book because a celebrity endorses it or because it is on a best seller list.* Such endorsement and fame may be a result of good marketing aimed at making profits.
- \* *Don't buy a book that promises "fast and easy" results.*  
Such talk is probably a false promise. It may be marketing "hype."
- \* *Do buy self-help books that are recommended by reliable and knowledgeable organizations, such as the organizations listed in Highlight 11.16 [on page 283 to 285 of the *Your Behavior* book]."*

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 286-287)



## The Power of Belief

"Typically, 30 to 40 percent of people benefit from techniques mentioned in self-help books *if they expect or hope those techniques will work*. Such is the power of belief! Expectations of improvement can lead to improvement in many cases, even if a technique, medication, or procedure has no real causal effect! These placebo effects are real.... And the effects of many self-help books as well as many psychological treatments are based upon them."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 286)



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**Highlight 11.19****Some Self-Help Materials of Demonstrated Effectiveness**

<b>Behavior Area</b>	<b>Useful Materials</b>
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy</i>, by Burns</li><li>• <i>Control Your Depression</i>, by Lewinsohn and others</li></ul>
Eating disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Overcoming Binge Eating</i>, by Fairburn</li></ul>
Insomnia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The Relaxation Response</i>, by Benson</li><li>• <i>Relief from Insomnia</i>, by Morin</li><li>• <i>:60 Second Sleep Ease: Quick Tips to Get a Good Night's Rest</i>, by Currie and Wilson</li></ul>
Panic disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Coping with Panic</i>, by Clum</li></ul>
Sexual dysfunctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality</i>, by Barbach</li><li>• <i>Becoming Orgasmic: A Sexual and Personal Growth Program for Women</i>, by Heiman and LoPiccolo</li><li>• <i>Prolong Your Pleasure</i>, by Zeiss and Zeiss</li></ul>
Social phobia/social anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Dying of Embarrassment: Help for Social Anxiety and Phobia</i>, by Markway and others</li><li>• <i>A New Guide to Rational Living</i>, by Ellis and Harper</li></ul>
Specific phobias, such as to spiders, snakes, and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Various materials, including "CAVE," a computer-assisted vicarious exposure program</li></ul>

*Source: Watkins and Clum, Handbook of Self-Help Therapies.*

## Professional Help



“Do not feel that you have to be crazy to use a mental health professional! Ordinary, normal people having difficulty changing their behavior also use them too as guides and helpers. Perhaps the term ‘assisted self-help professional’ is better to use than ‘mental health professional.’ In any case, seek professional help if needed, but approach the selection of such a helper carefully rather than casually” - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 289)

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## Do You Lack Commitment to Change?

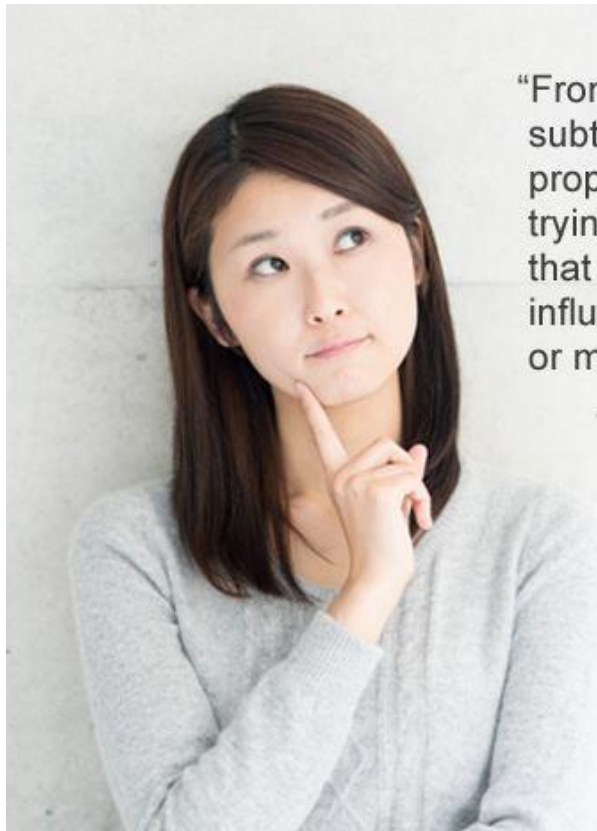
“If you can’t develop enough commitment to change a problem behavior, a professional who uses the “Motivational Interviewing” approach may be able to help you. Such specialists may also be able to help you clarify your goals, develop a change plan, and support your change efforts.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 288)

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## C. How Others Try to Influence What You Do



"From requests and commands to the subtle influences of advertising and propaganda, other people are constantly trying to affect your behavior. It seems that you face hundreds of attempts to influence you every day--perhaps 400 or more!"

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 250.)

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<b>Highlight</b> <b>11.20</b>	<b>Attempts to Influence You and Others</b>
<p>The world is awash with attempts to influence: blandishments of advertisers; twists of politicians; systematic campaigns of conversion, seduction, or trickery. Knowledge of how influence works will allow us to better resist it.</p> <p>(Tharp, <i>Delta Theory</i>, 3-4)</p>	
<p>- Richard Pfau (<i>Your Behavior</i>, pg.290)</p> <p><a href="https://facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/">facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/</a></p>	

## Ways That Others Attempt to Influence You

"Major ways others try to influence what you do include efforts that attempt to:

- Have you perceive things as they wish you to perceive them.
- Direct your attention to areas they wish you to perceive.
- Create in your mind certain preferred states, goals, values, and other references that they want you to have....
- Increase or decrease the importance of your...feelings about people, things, and events.
- Develop your knowledge, beliefs, skills, attitudes, and abilities in ways that lead to behaviors that they wish to either promote or discourage.
- Provide real or distorted feedback about areas that are of special interest to you, including what you do and how you are doing.
- Use social control methods, including legal, medical, and religious techniques, as well as personal approval and disapproval of you and what you do.
- Make it easier or harder for you to do some things."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 291)



## D. To Conclude

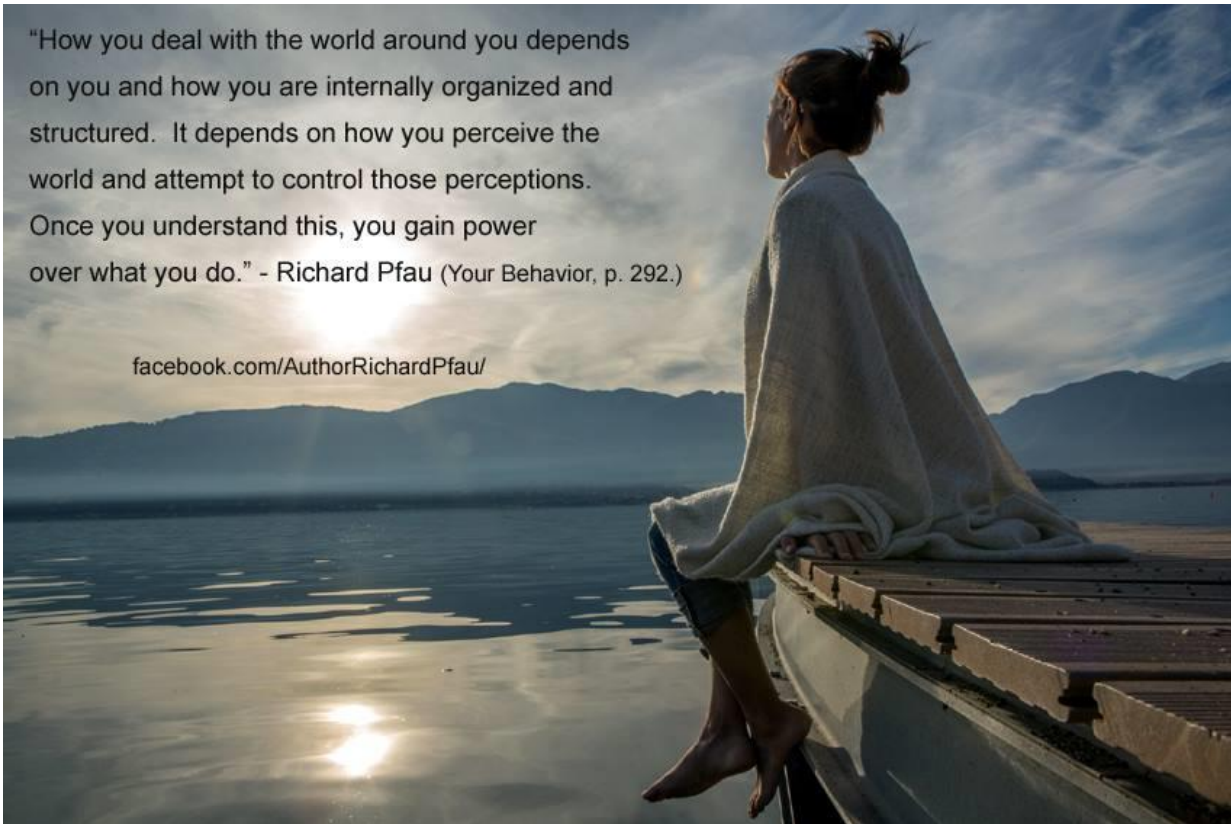
**"You are...a very good survivor. That is, you do things that help you survive, avoid doing things that may result in your death, and have done so up to now because you are organized and structured to survive.... Of course, your environment is also important to your survival. You need food, oxygen, and the help of others to live, but the bottom line is this: *you are naturally structured and organized to sense, learn, and deal with your environment in ways that help you to survive.*" - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 249-250)**

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"How you deal with the world around you depends on you and how you are internally organized and structured. It depends on how you perceive the world and attempt to control those perceptions. Once you understand this, you gain power over what you do." - Richard Pfau (Your Behavior, p. 292.)

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Besides my book *Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do* (2017), here's a good website that you can go to for more information:

A dark blue rectangular graphic with white and light blue text. At the top, the acronym "IAPCT" is written in large, bold, white letters. Below it, the full name "INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PERCEPTUAL CONTROL THEORY" is written in smaller, light blue, all-caps letters. A decorative horizontal line with a wavy, double-line pattern in light blue and white separates the text from the bottom section. At the bottom, the website address "WWW.IAPCT.ORG" is written in large, bold, light blue letters. Below that, the tagline "YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTUAL CONTROL" is written in smaller, white, all-caps letters.

**IAPCT**  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PERCEPTUAL CONTROL THEORY

**WWW.IAPCT.ORG**  
YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTUAL CONTROL



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