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Change: It Is About Doing and Not Doing
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When we think about changing an unwanted habit or giving up some behavior, we automatically focus on "I'm not going to … anymore." Focusing on eliminating a behavior can also be the therapeutic focus in the treatment of problem behaviors. We have focused on the "don't do that anymore" approach to fixing psychological problems and at times have not developed a method to replace the problematic behavior. In recent years, the advent of Positive Psychology has helped us to think about the basic needs of all human beings and how these needs are met or not. When individuals have behavioral problems or interpersonal conflicts, it is likely they are trying to meet some basic need and are going about it in a fashion that ultimately is ineffective.

Meeting Human Needs

Basic human needs have been defined by various theorists in different ways. Most lists would include these **human goods**: relatedness, knowledge, healthy living, creativity, excellence in work and play, inner peace, excellence in self-agency, spirituality, and happiness. **Relatedness** has to do with a sense of community with others and a sense of belonging. **Knowledge** is having a level of understanding about information that is sufficiently broad and on topics that are important to the individual. **Healthy living** includes physical, emotional and sexual health. It calls for living life in a way that engenders a sense of well-being. **Creativity** is engaging in creative ways of thinking and behaving, which involves stretching in how one engages the world. **Excellence in work and play** is the sense that one has mastered or excels in something. **Inner peace** is freedom from emotional turmoil and undue stress, while **excellence in self-agency** involves an independence and self-direction in life, a sense of self-sufficiency. **Spirituality** is finding sufficient deeper meaning and purpose in one's life, and **happiness** involves engaging in activities that bring about joy.

Because individuals have different ways of seeing and defining their true self, they may emphasize one or two of these *human goods* over others. Some needs may be met quite well, but others may be neglected. For example, someone who is, to all appearances, successful and happy and is a heavy smoker may be employing an unhealthy means of coping and managing stress as a means to achieve *inner peace*. While smoking will negatively impact one's social interactions and overall health, just quitting will also leave a void. Giving up smoking successfully will require finding appropriate ways to cope that do not negatively affect one's life in the process.

Focusing on behavior change without cultivating new and healthy ways to meet our basic needs/human goods is short-sighted. While we may give time and energy to avoiding certain behaviors, we must also identify and practice behaviors (*approach goals*) that help us meet our needs adequately without addictions or self-defeating and offending behaviors.

Developing Approach Goals

Determining goals begins with taking time to reflect on key questions such as: "If I do not smoke, what will I do? What did I enjoy doing before I started smoking? What do others do to cope with stress? The next step is to identify "what I will do instead," practicing new ways of fulfilling one's goals. It is important to realize that it takes a longtime to learn to smoke a pack a day and that it will likely take a while to learn new ways to manage stress without cigarettes. Upon reflection, smokers may find that getting outside, conversing with others and looking at the scenery were pleasant aspects of their old smoking behavior. Taking a walk, getting out of the building, or stopping by the lunch room and talking for a few minutes may be effective alternatives to manage stress. Learning deep breathing and meditation may add to the ability to mentally get away and break the monotony. Once helpful behaviors are identified, they must be practiced regularly so they can be incorporated as replacements. Through practice the person can see that the new behaviors work. In other words, if an individual takes a five-minute walk and focuses on breathing a few times a day, he/she may not feel the need for a cigarette.

With respect to someone who acted inappropriately with a parishioner or others, the process would look similar. After discussion of how the person sees himself, he identifies and prioritizes the human goods he desires. He then explores what human goods were being sought through the offending behavior and how he might meet these needs in some new and appropriate ways. It is important to examine what went awry in the past, identifying the thoughts and behaviors which led to past inappropriate behavior. This becomes the focus of relapse prevention—the behaviors to be avoided in the future to reduce the risk of re-offense. At the same time, identification of the appropriate means for achieving human goods is explored, and new goal-fulfilling behaviors are initiated. In this way the old problematic behaviors are the focus of avoidance strategies, i.e., relapse prevention, and the new behaviors are approached and practiced..

All of us would say that we do not want individuals to repeat their old behaviors. But isolation and avoidance of human interaction are not a breeding ground for positive behaviors. Individuals need the support and encouragement of those around them to make the positive daily choices that develop new behavior patterns.

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