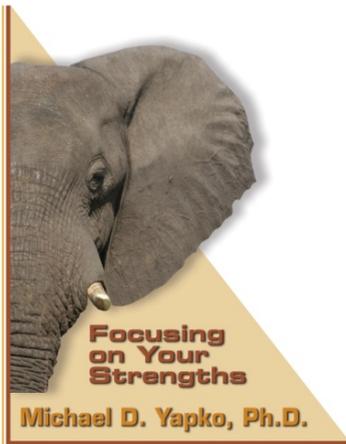


Global Thinking and Bad Decisions: Why Clients Need Your Help Making Contextual Distinctions

With

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

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So, Which is it?

- Look before you leap... BUT,
He who hesitates is lost.
- If at first you don't succeed try, try again... BUT
Don't beat your head against a stone wall.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder...BUT
Out of sight, out of mind.
- You're never too old to learn...BUT
You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

So, Which is it?

- It's better to be safe than sorry... BUT
Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
- Do unto others as you would have others do unto you... BUT
Nice guys finish last.
- Birds of a feather flock together... BUT
Opposites attract.
- Winners never quit... BUT
Quit while you're ahead.

So, which is it? In every instance, the only reasonable answer is, “*It depends on the circumstances...*”

What happens when someone doesn't know that, though, and stays *reflexively* loyal to a philosophy or belief that causes them pain when it works against them in some context?

The goal is to help the client identify *personal* and *situational factors* that suggest doing *this* not *that*, and then help that awareness become reflexive for the person, perhaps using hypnosis for this reason

Discrimination Strategy Defined

A discrimination strategy is an ability to *reliably* and *skillfully* distinguish between two or more available stimuli or options in a specific context

Does someone even *know* when there are multiple choices available, when a distinction needs to be made?

Reflexive responding suggests that all too frequently the answer is *no*.

This perspective clashes directly with a
“psychological need” or “motivated
symptomatology” perspective of peoples’
problems

Even if you are aware there are multiple options available, then how do you choose **wisely** among them?

The therapeutic goal is to enhance the quality of the client's decisions and reactions

Criteria of Distinction

Your criteria of distinction determine what, out of a wide range of possibilities, you will focus on and respond to

Most of the problems we treat come about directly as a result of the client ***employing criteria that are ineffective*** and thereby give rise to their problems

Barriers to Developing Effective Discriminations

- Global (over-general) thinking
- Low tolerance for ambiguity (jump to conclusions)
- A personal value system that precludes considering alternatives
- Rigidity (tenacious holding on to a perspective even when self-limiting)
- Narrow, limited range of experience
- Gullibility, naiveté

Children by Nature:

- Are global thinkers
- Have a low tolerance for ambiguity (developmentally, they are concrete thinkers)
- Have a personal value system that is just beginning to develop (kids are by nature impulsive –they want what they want; delayed gratification is a learnable skill)
- Are cognitively rigid
- Have a limited range of experience

Global Cognitive
Style is a Key Factor
**When you can't see the
trees for the forest...**

Spotting “Fake News”

- Since the November 2016 US presidential election, Facebook and other tech companies have taken some steps to try and deal with the problem. Facebook has integrated fact-checking organizations into its platform to flag up disputed stories, while Google has kicked sites peddling fake news off its ad network — depriving them of revenue, and recently added a fact check feature to its Search and News tools.

Conspiracy Nation

- "The Internet has become an echo-chamber where we self-select for our preconceived notions rather than challenge them, finding like-minded people who share our beliefs and validate them," said David Robert Grimes, PhD, a cancer researcher and physicist at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Oxford. "This might explain precisely why conspiracy theories are flourishing across all sides of the political and social spectrum."
- Conspiracy Nation: How the Growing Trend of Unfounded Beliefs Hurts Patients - *Medscape* - Jul 21, 2017.

Beliefs are self-preserving

Cognitive dissonance is the primary barrier to absorbing contradictory feedback; as people form their views, it's often what they *don't* pay attention to (by avoiding, rejecting, or minimizing contradictory feedback) that comes back to hurt them

"Entertaining, illuminating and – when you recognize yourself
in the stories it tells – mortifying." – *Wall Street Journal*

MISTAKES WERE MADE

(but not by *me*)

**WHY WE JUSTIFY FOOLISH BELIEFS,
BAD DECISIONS, AND HURTFUL ACTS**

Carol Tavris *and* Elliot Aronson

Examples of Global Therapeutic Truisms

- “Trust your guts” (inner sage, unconscious)
- “The body remembers”
- “All symptoms serve a purpose”
- “Be fully present in the moment”
- “It’s a disease...it’s not your fault”
- “Everyone is entitled to good self-esteem”
- “Hypnosis is always empowering”

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*Why We Never
Think Alone*

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and
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The Knowledge Illusion

- “The human mind is both genius and pathetic, brilliant and idiotic. People are capable of the most remarkable feats...and yet we are equally capable of the most remarkable demonstrations of hubris and foolhardiness...People often lack skills that seem basic, like evaluating how risky an action is, and it’s not clear they can ever be learned... Perhaps most important, individual knowledge is remarkably shallow, only scratching the surface of the true complexity of the world, and yet we often don’t realize how little we understand. The result is we are often overconfident, sure we are right about things we know little about.”

Zippers and Owning Ignorance

- Cognitive scientists Frank Keil and Leon Rozenblit, studying the “Illusion of Explanatory Depth” (IoED) developed a means for studying ignorance. Here’s an example:
- 1. On a scale of 1 to 7, how well do you understand how zippers work?
- 2. Please explain: How does a zipper work? Describe in as much detail as you can all the steps involved in a zipper’s operation.
- 3. Now, on the same 1 to 7 scale, rate your knowledge of how a zipper works again.
- There’s a high probability your second rating was lower than your first, essentially saying, “I guess I know less than I thought.”

Owning Ignorance

- “This is the essence of the Illusion of Explanatory Depth. Before trying to explain something, people feel they have a reasonable level of understanding; after explaining, they don’t.”
- From *The Knowledge Illusion* by Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach (March, 2017, New York: Riverhead Books)

Fast and Slow Thinking; Intuitive and Deliberative Thinking

- “The illusion of explanatory depth is a product of the intuitive mind; we think about how things work automatically and effortlessly. But when we deliberate about our knowledge, our illusion is shattered.”
- Are you more intuitive or deliberative?

Framing Effects on Choice

In a classic study in which people could choose between surgery and radiation based on surgical survival or mortality statistics, when people were told there was a 90% short term survival rate for surgery or a 10% immediate mortality rate, people chose the surgery when the 90% survival rate was the choice frame

McNeil et al., *New England J of Medicine*, 1982, 306, 1259-1262

The Therapist as a “*Choice Architect*”

- “A choice architect has the responsibility for organizing the context in which people make decisions...*If you are a doctor and must describe the alternative treatments available to a patient, you are a choice architect (italics mine)*...If you are a parent, describing possible educational options to your son or daughter, you are a choice architect.” (p. 3)

Thaler, R. & Sunstein, C. (2008). *Nudge*. New Haven: Yale.

Influence is Inevitable –and *Necessary*

- As a *choice architect*, you will inevitably influence your client by what choices you offer, and how you steer the client directly or indirectly in a presumably desirable direction.
- People make bad decisions when they: 1) don't pay full attention; 2) don't have complete information; 3) have limited cognitive abilities (e.g., a lack of discrimination strategies); and, 4) lack impulse control.

Some Common Decision Frames

- “Gut feeling” (emotion in the moment)
- Expectations (what you think will happen)
- Familiarity (as done before)
- Tradition, modeling (sig. others do it this way)
- Novelty (just want to do it differently)
- Avoiding the negative (personally/interpersonally)
- Seeking the positive (personally/interpersonally)
- Immediate gratification
- Long term outcomes

The Discriminating Therapist:

Asking “How” Questions,
Making Distinctions,
and Finding Direction in Therapy



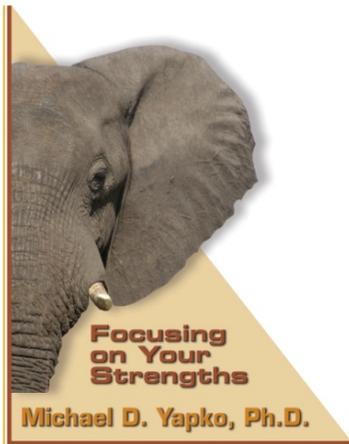
by

Michael D. Yapko, PhD

With a Foreword by Diane Yapko, MA
Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

www.yapko.com

Thank you for coming!



Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.
www.yapko.com

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

email: michael@yapko.com

website: www.yapko.com

P.O. Box 487

Fallbrook, CA. 92088-0487

USA

