

THE BLUEPRINT OF PERSONALITY MODEL OF MIND— A NEW PARADIGM INTEGRATING CONSCIOUSNESS AND BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

In psychotherapy, the separation into a conscious and a subconscious mind that prompts most of our repeated actions and behaviors is widely accepted. In our work as hypnotherapists we have observed changes and mechanisms in our clients that make us

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challenge the prevailing view and introduce a new model: The Blueprint of Personality. We propose that all repetitive behaviors and actions can be divided into three categories: 1) auto-behaviors from deliberately created habits or strategies based on our values, 2) conditioned behaviors from our fight-or-flight system and 3) conditioned behaviors from our rest-and-rejuvenate system. All three categories are active at all times in combination with a number of different other processes and responses allowing us to gather information, build a view of the world and ourselves and interact with it. Thus, there is no conscious or subconscious mind prompting these repeated actions and behaviors in the traditional sense, rather a distributed amount of automatic processes and responses, which may or may not come to our awareness—an observing part of our being that provides us with Theory of Mind (the ability to attribute mental states and understanding that others might have different emotions, motives and intentions than yourself).

In addition, The Blueprint of Personality Model suggests that every behavior that is not caused by damage in the neural system is the result of a conditioning or strategy, not with the intent of survival, but rather with the intention of avoiding discomfort or gaining pleasure. This perspective implies that there is always a positive intention at the root of every behavior. Sometimes we become aware of these processes—usually when they fail. Our awareness tends to regard them as either choices or disorders of the mind, while they are actually auto-reactions. By labeling an unwanted repeated behavior as a disorder it creates a negative context for healing, since it is compared to what we think of as normal or useful in a social context, while in the individual it is merely one of thousands of possible auto-responses to a situation that has been conditioned in the past. If these auto-responses can be brought to awareness and reset, or the conditioning is reconditioned, we have noticed that the behavior will change.

Applying The Blueprint of Personality Model allows us to understand our clients' seemingly irrational behaviors, thoughts and feelings on a deeper level. The model also enables a better understanding and resolving of our clients' challenges, as well as an explanation of the benefits and shortcomings of medication and therapies. Since the predictability of human behaviors, thoughts and

feelings are what is referred to as our personality, we call our model The Blueprint of Personality. We invite you to put it to test.

Introduction

In psychotherapy, the definition of a conscious and a subconscious mind that prompts most of our repeated actions and behaviours widely accepted. However, in our work as hypnotherapists we have come to realize that other mechanisms are in action, making us questioning the current view and introducing a new paradigm: The Blueprint of Personality Model. In this model we focus on awareness instead of the level of consciousness, and behaviors as auto-reactions.

Our model can explain, document and reproduce the expression of a repeated behavior in a person. This repetitive behavior is what makes us both predictable and different from other people, i.e. our personality traits. Since a blueprint traditionally describes a technical drawing, documenting for example an architecture, we choose to use this word as a metaphor for our model.

Awareness

In general, it is believed that the human mind can make conscious decisions. However, studies by Benjamin Libet (Shevrin, Ghannam et al. 2002) suggest otherwise: We do seem to be able to intentionally resist or avoid acting on an impulse, but all action starts with an impulse, which we might not be aware of, before we make our deliberate decision. Not being conscious in a certain situation suggests that we are not aware. Instead of using the term "conscious" in this meaning, we suggest using the word "aware". We can be aware of what is going on in the world around us or inside us; our thoughts, feelings and actions. We regard this awareness as a flashlight in a dark room, where processes are going on at all times, for example breathing, gene regulation, immune responses, day dreaming, or scanning our senses for avoiding discomfort and gaining pleasure. In our most common state of awareness, where we interact with the world around us, this flashlight is directed at the outer world, and referencing it to our inner world, constantly comparing the two to navigate, and prompt (re-)actions. We suggest that this is the main function of our awareness, and that all other processes of cognition

and intuition may or may not become visible to our limited light of awareness. An example is psychosis: Implementing our model, psychosis would be the effect of our fantasy, as in a dream, creating an alternative reality for our awareness to experience, without realizing that it is created in the same system. This is also discussed as the “mineness” as in perception of the minimal self in, for example, theories about schizophrenia (Martin, Wittmann et al. 2014).

The different states of consciousness can be viewed from the perspective of The Blueprint of Personality Model, where they are states of awareness, rather than consciousness:

Waking awareness is a process where our awareness is connected to our outer world through our senses, processing and interacting with it, and comparing to our inner map of the world to decide courses of action; from side stepping an obstacle to smiling at somebody. This is one of the more interactive states of awareness, since it requires us to constantly revise our interactions, comparing what is coming to our sense with our stored vision of the world.

Contemplative or daydreaming awareness is a process, where we interact slightly less proactively and more out of habit, and our awareness allows our interactions with the outer world to go on autopilot; be it walking, exercising, doing the dishes, or driving a car. We accept the suspension of sense of time and critical evaluation in favor of being able to work creatively in a state of flow and enhanced fantasy. When day dreaming happens outside of our awareness, it has been referred to as a special state, called unconscious fantasy (Erreich 2015), which we propose is the same state as day dreaming that is brought in and out of awareness.

Dreaming involves several systems, but excludes our sense of time and our reality checking, i.e. what is or is not possible. We can dream that we are children flying in the sky, which is perfectly possible during the dream. A dream is the ultimate flow and fantasy process. However, we are still aware in the sense that our awareness can experience the dream and remember it when we wake up, depending on if this mechanism is activated during the dream.

Hypnosis is related to the state of dreaming in the sense that our time perception and reality checking can be temporarily set aside. In the hypnotherapeutic community ideas about what is or is not possible are usually referred to as our critical factor, sometimes metaphorically pictured as a gatekeeper between the states of normal awakesness and the state of hypnosis or trance. In our model we regard the critical factor as a portion of our map of the world that is temporarily filtered out during hypnosis to be able to find solutions outside our normally limiting thoughts.

Meditation is often compared to hypnosis, and in our distinction the sense of time is tuned out, as well as all other thought processes that evaluate data from incoming senses and automatic processes that are triggered by them. It is a state of allowing all auto-behavior to take a break; one of simply being—thus a sense of belonging, peace and non-being. The awareness is in this case, at best, a spectator. Prayer might be a process similar to meditation and hypnosis; research shows that the effect of the Quran on a Persian-speaking Muslim enhanced Alpha and Theta waves (Vaghefi, Nasrabadi et al. 2015), which is also the case in the first two.

Deep sleep is a rejuvenating process, where almost every other process, including our awareness, is closed down for repair work on a cellular level. Studies show that one of the factors that challenges healing and rejuvenation is psychological stress, which may explain why meditation and mindfulness can improve the immune system (House 2015). In The Blueprint of Personality Model, the rejuvenation does not necessarily require turning off our awareness, because it is possible to rest without actually falling asleep, per se. However, one of the processes that is immediately affected when we are struggling with stress and emotional dissonance is sleep. Apparently, the system prefers us to be awake and solve the issue. Therefore, treating stress as a sleeping disorder is basically like sedating the messenger.

Behaviours

We propose that most of our repeated behaviors are auto-reactions, i.e. habits, conditioned responses and strategies. Only when we run into a completely new situation will we change our behaviors and responses, and sometimes not even then. A *habit* can be created automatically outside our awareness and then be brought into it, such

as biting nails, or intentionally and proactively, such as conditioning an optimal tennis forehand. A thought pattern can also be a habit. If we think a depressing thought a sufficient number of times, it becomes a habit. Once a habit with a neural circuit that keeps firing automatically, it will continue triggering until we are in a constant state of depression, being aware of it, but not being aware of what button to press.

Emotional reactions are habits that have become hardcoded, and the response to a stimulus of some kind. Post-traumatic stress is an example of a negative context, where even a vague stimulus reminding us of an earlier negative emotional response can trigger this response over and over again. Always

smiling when we greet a new person is a positive context that allows us to make more friends without thinking about it. Most of these emotional reactions are conditioned responses that auto-happen reactively without us even becoming aware of them. *Strategies*, the third kind of auto-reactions, can also be considered habits, which we use without thinking about it. A strategy can be “don’t ever give up” and it can cause us to hold on to stock shares that plummet or it can save our life when we fall into a river. We propose that most of our strategies are conditioned or habits, because we cannot use a strategy, unless it is already there. Another common strategy trap—often in high achievers—is procrastination, which usually comes together with a strategy of perfection: “I see no sense in starting to do anything, unless I am 100% sure it can be done to perfection, therefore I do not start”.

By applying The Blueprint of Personality Model on our clients we put aside the view of a conscious or subconscious mind as separate processes acting on the clients behalf (positive intention) but producing negative side effects. Instead we discuss repeated and unwanted behaviors and divide them into three categories, all of which may or may not be obvious to the client’s awareness. All three categories are active at all times in combination with a number of different other processes and responses allowing us to interact with the outside world, gather information, build a view of the world and ourselves and navigate it with the two objectives of avoiding discomfort and gaining pleasure.

- Auto-behaviors (habits) using strategies from the past to react to stimuli

- Conditioned behavior from rest-and-rejuvenate processes and responses
- Conditioned behavior from fight-or-flight processes and responses

An auto-behavior is a strategy from the past used to react to a stimulus, e.g. always answering the phone when it rings, being polite to strangers, how to drive, or how to play music. Auto-behaviors induce actions, and we propose that the driving forces in all of them are strategies and habits created to avoid discomfort and gain pleasure in the past, until we run into a situation we don't know how to handle: Then we temporarily freeze and look for a new strategy or habit.

Conditioned behaviors from our rest-and-rejuvenate process can for example be the urge to take a run to clear our mind, laughing in the company of certain people, and coping with or bouncing back from stressful situations (resilience). They can also be our attitude to keep trying until we succeed or giving up, or how perfect something has to be done to allow us to feel good about it. *A conditioned behavior from the fight-or-flight responses or processes* in the amygdala, e.g. anxiety, blushing, sweating or a phobia, is deconditioned, or depotentiated through an intervention specifically designed for this purpose, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Trauma Tapping Technique or Havening Techniques, following the depotentiation model of Dr Ronald Ruden (Ronald A. Ruden 2005) and the

model of how disruption of reconsolidation erases a fear memory trace in the amygdala (Agren, Engman et al. 2012).fn

Ideomotor responses

In hypnotherapy, there is a tradition of eliciting ideomotor responses from a client for example by holding a pendulum. This can also be performed using a non-hypnotic method like the recently developed method "The Swan" (Bob Burns). In forums discussing The Swan, inquires about where the signals come from are very common. The prevailing hypothesis is often that the origin is the sub-conscious mind constantly looking after us. We would like to pose an alternative to this hypothesis: We believe that most of our repeated behaviors are automatic, and our free will is our ability to neglect to follow them through. The elicitation of ideomotor responses, in this hypothesis, is

that we simply ask for them to auto-happen without passing through our awareness—in the same way that we can swat away a fly automatically. Research shows that awareness of some of our actions is delayed to allow us to repress unpleasant memories before they reach awareness (Shevrin, Ghannam et al. 2002). There is also research indicating a correlation between hypnotizability and dissociative capacity to correlate with our model (Cleveland, Korman et al. 2015). We regard this as the same mechanism—dissociating our awareness from the response.

Discussion

The Blueprint of Personality Model is a new paradigm of awareness, offering an alternative to the traditional model of the conscious and subconscious mind. The Blueprint of Personality Model does not only question the existence of a subconscious mind with its own agenda but also whether the idea of a subconscious mind still is a useful metaphor in therapy or rather a counterproductive one. We do not have a separate conscious or subconscious mind, which cognitively or actively tries to help us navigate through life. Instead there are a large number of automatic processes and responses that are online at all times with the intention of avoiding discomfort and gaining pleasure. Whether we notice them or not depends on where we direct our awareness, and if we are interacting with the outer reality or not.

We are proposing a perspective where our awareness merely has an observing function; like a periscope through which we can perceive our inner and outer world; with a limited viewpower and with the functionality of a topographic view, trying to help us interact with the world to avoid discomfort and gain pleasure. This observing part of our being also provides us with Theory of Mind (the ability to attribute mental states and understanding that others might have different emotions, motives and intentions than yourself). Most of our repeated behaviors are based on habits, learned in- or out of awareness, that are auto-performed, and strategies that are prompted by stimuli. We believe this to be the answer to how we can act, think and feel many things without cognitively wanting to. We believe that this also explains many of the phenomena observed in hypnosis; being able to keep the awareness of our client and at the same time turning on and off parts of the other processes in order to find the source of any

problematic challenge the client's face, including their perception of time, the world, themselves, their capacity and

some of their inner processes, including emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

Applying The Blueprint of Personality Model allows us to understand our clients' seemingly irrational behaviors, thoughts and feelings on a deeper level. The model enables a better understanding and resolving of our clients' challenges, and allows us to understand the benefits and shortcomings of medication and therapies. Our experiences of using The Blueprint of Personality Model has improved results with our clients to the degree where we are doing 2-4 sessions in most cases when we in the past would have done many more. We find our results to be consistent, and our ability to explain to our clients the mechanics of their dilemmas easier; providing a larger cognitive base of cooperation. In the cases where a conditioning is an alarm meant to avoid discomfort, and now instead is creating it, we help the client to turn this alarm off. *fv*By helping our clients becoming aware of conflicting strategies they will often change the strategies by themselves. In our experience, medication can temporarily interrupt or lower the negative effects of a conditioned response. However, it can only be changed by deconditioning, or by offering the system a more productive response. This includes autonomous reactions such as compulsive obsessive disorder, irritable bowel syndrome, fear of public speaking, low self-esteem, anxiety and procrastination. *fn*

We conclude that most of our actions are reactions to stimuli in the form of habits, conditioned response, strategies and processes, and that most of the predictability of our personality is based on these three types of responses. Therefore we would like to challenge the conventional idea of a conscious and subconscious mind with the Blueprint of Personality Model. As a consequence, therapy should focus on the source of the clients' problems—the conditioning—in order to produce more productive patterns, strategies and responses in the same way they were created.

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