The Why and How of Self-Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Self-Evaluation is a tool for helping people choose more effectively. Change for the better is built on the inner judgment that there is a better available life path. Choice theory allows for many kinds of self-evaluation which are outlined in this article. Self-evaluation is a thinking behavior in which the mind looks at the entire control system and evaluates choices, wants, and perceptions. Self-Evaluation promotes more meaningful lives and enhances personal and professional relationship skills.

INTRODUCTION

Self-evaluation in the practice of reality therapy serves as the cornerstone (Glasser, 1990) of the building or keystone in the arch (Wubbolding, 2000, 2001). People change behavior only after conducting a meaningful, internal, and searching assessment of the current effectiveness of their choice system or control system or at least one component of it.

Self-evaluation invokes the behavioral system, and is more than just a comparison between a “want and a have” (comparing place). It is a thinking, cognitive behavior in which the human mind reflects upon itself, ascertaining, weighing, and judiciously deliberating about behavior, quality world, and perception.

A skill, developed through trial and error, interaction with the external world, and input from the environment, self-evaluation is difficult for many clients, students, and employees.

Children raised in dysfunctional families often experience lives of ambiguity. In a chemically dependent family, a child’s behavior often results in praise one day and criticism or even condemnation the next day for the same choice. Inconsistency, lack of dependable routines and structures, or continual turmoil creates in the child’s quality world a confused picture album, i.e., unclear and contrary wants as well as a deficit in the skill of self-evaluation.

With the increase of divorce and the preceding family turbulence, the increase in substance abusing families, and the often-destructive information received from the media, children, and adults recurrently demonstrate an insufficiency in this important skill.

Consequently, more than ever, the educator, therapist, parent, and manager need to be adept and savvy in asking questions which touch upon, teach, and elicit the skill of self-evaluation in students, clients, employees, and children.

TYPES OF SELF-EVALUATION:
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

This component of the reality therapy/lead management delivery system has, of course, been developed far beyond the original “Is it helping” question of early reality therapy. Thus, shunning a rigid and mechanical barrage of questioning, the skillful reality therapist works in a fluid and flexible manner and generates a wide variety of pertinent questions geared to each situation. Wubbolding (2000) has identified 22 types of self-evaluation based on choice theory. Each category of self-evaluation relates to a component of the human control system. Below is a summary of each type with sample questions.

1. Overall behavioral direction and purpose. “Is the overall direction of your life taking you closer or farther away from your goal?” “Is your overall direction getting you more involved or less involved with people you care about?”

2. Choices. “Whose choices can you control? Your own? Your children’s, etc.?”

3. Specific behaviors: effective or ineffective. “Is your present specific behavior helping or hurting you?” “What are you doing that is keeping you from being worse off than you are?”

4. Specific actions related to rules. “Are your current actions against a rule or a law?” “Will your current actions keep you free of trouble?”

5. Specific actions: acceptable or unacceptable. “Does what you’re doing seem reasonable to the people around you?”

6. Thinking behaviors: ineffective or effective self-talk. “How do such statements as, ‘I can’t change’ or ‘They won’t let me’ or ‘I’m going to keep doing what is harmful to me’ impact your effort to change your behavior?”

7. Belief system. “Does your belief about family roles impede or enhance the harmony in your family relationships?”

8. Feeling behaviors: helpful or harmful emotions. “Do your positive and negative feelings draw people toward you or push them away?” “What effect does your anger have on your physiology/health?”

9. Clients’ best interests: Specific actions and thoughts that enhance or diminish their long-range interest. “How does the short term gain of your choice strengthen or diminish the long term gain for you?”

10. High-quality or low-quality behavior: Quality is the standard. “What effect does your behavior have on the quality
of your work?" "How does your contribution add to the quality of the organization?"

11. Life enhancement: Life is improved whether or not the behavior or want initially appears to be personally satisfying. "Does your current life goal and behavioral choices enhance your overall life or impair it?"

12. Behavior as measured by goals of the organization. "Is your behavior congruent with the goals of the entire organization?"

13. Wants: Realistic or attainable: "Is there a reasonable possibility of getting what you want in the near or distant future?"

14. Wants: Beneficial or harmful to self, others, or the organization. "Are your wants truly in your best interest?"

15. Wants: Precise and clearly enough defined to cause consistent action. "If you had a clear idea of what you want, what would you be doing differently from what you’re doing now?"

16. Wants as nonnegotiable, highly desirable, or mere wishes. "Which of your wants is most important and which is the least important for you?"

17. Perceptions: Viewpoint, plus or minus. "When you compare your inner sense of limitations with the external ways in which others present themselves, are you being fair to yourself?"

18. Perceptions: Locus of control. "Given your circumstances, what do you have control over and what do you not have control over?" "How much of your trouble are you causing yourself?"

19. Values and behavior: Congruence or lack of it. "How are you helped or hurt when you violate a principle that you say is important to you?"

20. Level of commitment: High enough to get desired results. "Is your present level of commitment the highest you are willing to make?"

21. Evaluation of the plan of action. "If you follow through on your plans, how will your life be better?" "How do you think your life will be if you don’t follow through: better, or worse, or the same?"

22. Professional self-evaluation. Practitioners of reality therapy use self-evaluation in their own professional lives. Questions include, "How am I facilitating my own personal growth?" "Is the quality of my service to the public the highest it can be?" "How can I/we increase the quality of my/our service?"

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

- Have you ever driven on a trip for several hours or even minutes and suddenly decided that you were going in the wrong direction? Someone might ask, "Why didn’t you turn around sooner?" You answer, "I didn’t know I was lost. When I finally judged that my current behavior was not effective, I made another choice."

- A universal experience is misplacing car keys, important papers, etc. Have you ever looked in the same place over and over and over again? Why? The reason is that human beings often subscribe to the misguided belief that if a behavior is not working, continue it, even intensify it. But the self-talk statement, "If it is not working do it again" is as flawed as the unproductive searching. Only when the searcher decides that the current behavior is fruitless, will change occur.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, self-evaluation can lead to more effective travels and happier foraging. All the more is self-evaluation useful for clients and students who seek the unattainable, choose the harmful, perceive that they are powerless, or think that half-hearted efforts will achieve a grandiose result. The authors have met dozens, even hundreds, of people who have made dramatic changes in their lives not merely because of satisfying relationships, but also because of their willingness to look inward and gallantly examine their own lives and available choices.

References