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The personal development craze has become a mega multi-dollar industry. Look in any bookstore and you will find a rather sizeable self-help section with every "how to make your life better" topic imaginable. Every weekend hundreds of self-help workshops are offered across the country. How to get more, have more, be more…it's all there in 3, 5 or 12 easy steps. Those of us who've read the books and ventured out to the workshops have felt "helped" and maybe even soared to an enlightened high…for a time. Shortly after the workshop ends, many (and maybe most) of us have found ourselves sliding back into the old habits and ways of thinking. We found it to be practically impossible to sustain new habits, much less a new perspective.

So, do self-programs really help? Do self-help programs produce lasting change? What accounts for the failure rate and is there a solution?

With enough time in the industry to observe the trends, some self-help gurus are admitting that personal development programs may not be the answer. Barbara DeAngelis, famous in the 80's from her Making Love Work books and seminars, recently confided to a TV interviewer that she was disappointed that her programs did not create more lasting change. Corporations that had at one time hired motivational speakers to give workshops for boosting performance through personal growth are shying away from such programs as the results appear to be short-lived.

There have been several analytical studies which have attempted to find reasons for the poor long-term results. An interesting assessment is that most self-help techniques use the least competent aspect of the mind--the conscious mind--to create and sustain change. The conscious mind can with great effort create lasting change, but let's face the facts…most people are unwilling to put out tremendous effort on a continual day-to-day basis. It could be compared to dieting which most find to be extremely challenging. The good news is that there are ways to naturally make lasting changes. One of the easiest ways to do this is to utilize the sub-conscious mind.

Research has documented that 95% of our behavior is controlled by our subconscious mind leaving only 5% under the control of our conscious mind. According to research, our subconscious minds process over 4 billion bits of information per second while the conscious mind processes a mere 2,000 bits. While the conscious mind has limited focus, the subconscious mind is capable of a broad focus. The subconscious takes in information from the environment at an astounding rate, making note of your environment, the lightening, noise, people, etc. The subconscious mind also handles all automatic processes of the body such as breathing, blinking, and digesting food, most of which is done without any conscious processing.

The subconscious mind's job is to learn and run programs so that your conscious mind can be free to focus. One way that the subconscious mind learns a program is through

repeating an action, conducted by the conscious mind, over and over again until it becomes "automatic". Take the example of learning to walk. When you were learning to walk you used your conscious mind. You were aware of every step and it took conscious effort and focus. But once walking was mastered you never really had to consciously think about it again. The "walking program" now resident in the sub-conscious mind is initiated by an instruction in the form of an intent from the conscious mind. The conscious mind, thereafter, is free to focus elsewhere while the "walking program" runs in the background and you walk without thinking. It is a great blessing that we have the subconscious mind. Can you imagine how arduous life would be if we had to consciously think how to walk, talk, drive? We'd never get anything done. The subconscious acquires hundreds of thousands of programs that help us navigate life effortlessly without a lot of conscious thought.

From the day you are born the subconscious is busy learning programs to help you. In addition to repetitive action which becomes a habit, the subconscious uses intense experience to learn programs. You only need to put your hand in the fire once to have the subconscious mind learn the "keep your body away from fire" program. This is also where our problems begin. Our subconscious mind has learned programs that hinder our ability to function in life.

For example, if you were bitten by a dog when you were five it is quite likely that you retained the fear of dogs to this day. Your subconscious mind quickly developed a program just like it did with the fire. With the presentation of the stimulus "dog" your subconscious now runs "dogs are harmful" program and you respond with fear. Consciously, you may be puzzled by your fear because you now know many people who have wonderful dogs. Nonetheless, you still respond the same way. Why? Because the subconscious mind is habitual and continues to run the "fear of dogs" program in spite of your conscious dislike of the program.

Now you can sit down in therapy (a conscious mind process) and talk about your fear all day long, but in most cases the fear still remains. It is very difficult and often impossible to change a subconscious mind process with a conscious mind process. You could put yourself through a process of trying to change your reaction to dogs by gradually de-sensitizing yourself. You could submit yourself in small encounters with friendly dogs and over time you could learn (or unlearn) not to be afraid of dogs. You could attend a dog phobic self-help group. It is likely that your reaction would be present to some degree (but at least you'd have friends.) It would take time, effort and repeated experience to learn that dogs were safe. Once learned the subconscious mind could run the "dogs are friendly" program and you could experience dogs in a new and delightful way.

Another important characteristic of the subconscious mind is that it has no concept of time. It doesn't know that the "fear of dogs" program is inappropriate and no longer serves you just because you are now an adult in the company of friendly dogs. It only knows to run this program at the sight of a dog.

An interesting aspect of the subconscious mind is that it does not know the difference between reality and imagination. When you mentally replay the experience of the dog biting you, the subconscious re-experiences the event, believing the experience is real and contemporary. The subconscious has no way of knowing that you are just imagining it and not experiencing it at this moment. The subconscious re-experiences the drama of the incident over and over again reinforcing all the neural pathways making the subconscious program strong and ready to run at the sight of a dog.

What operates and initiates the running of the subconscious mind's program are beliefs. A belief is developed when we repeat a thought or an experience many, many times. One of the purposes of beliefs is to organize experience so that we don't put ourselves in situations that would be harmful to us. Beliefs act as a governor to our experience. Again, using the dog example, through repetition of this frightening experience in our own mind we develop the belief that dogs are harmful. This belief then initiates the "fear of dogs program" at the sight/sound/smell etc. stimulus of "dog." The belief becomes a filter from which we live in our world. Beliefs however, exist on a subconscious level just under our conscious awareness.

The sub-conscious over time develops thousands of beliefs that govern thousands of sub-conscious programs. We have a belief for just about everything, including who we are (our identity) and what we can and can't do it the world. We may believe about ourselves: "I am a confident of accomplishing anything I put my mind to. I am intelligent…good looking…loving…caring…ambitious..." We may also have beliefs about other people "People are generally trustworthy…dependable…caring…". We have beliefs about our world…"The world is a benevolent place to live…".

A person who believes that they can do anything that they put their mind to will react very differently from a person who believes that they fail at most things they try. The person who has a positive sub-conscious belief will probably initiate a program for learning. The person who holds a negative belief will probably initiate a very different sub-conscious program like "let me get the heck out of here now before I embarrass myself" - program! When our beliefs hold us back from doing what we want to do in life; or puts limits on reaching for all that we can be, we have "limiting beliefs".

Just like the programs we have adopted, our limiting beliefs are held on the sub-conscious level. Think as we may that we should believe differently and want to believe differently, the belief still persists on the sub-conscious level. So when we subconsciously believe "I will only be valued if I am a caretaker", our program revs up, runs out and finds someone to take care of, and we find ourselves (once again) doing all the work in a relationship.

Gaining access to the subconscious mind and the limiting beliefs that govern our reactions and behavior is the most expedient way to change. As a coach, I now use a process called PSYCH-K™ to help my clients to quickly make powerful and lasting changes to their beliefs. PSYCH-K™ stimulates both hemispheres of the brain which allows the sub-conscious mind to be reprogrammed. As a consequence, changes take

place naturally and easily. Once a belief is changed, the responses to previously challenging situations also changes…and it is automatic!

In summary, your life is a reflection of your beliefs. These beliefs – usually subconscious – are the cumulative effect of life-long "programming." As a result of past negative programming, we sometimes think and behave in self-defeating ways. PSYCH-K provides a user-friendly way to rewrite the "software" of your mind by changing beliefs that sabotage you into beliefs that support you...quickly and easily.

When you rewrite the "software" of your mind, you change the "printout" of your life.