

---

## *Just so you know . . .*

I remember a time before PCT. Not before PCT existed, just a time before I knew about it. I initially studied to become a schoolteacher. I taught in preschools and primary schools, and then did some postgraduate study and taught in special schools, and later worked as an advisory teacher for behavior management programs. For as long as I can remember I've been interested in why people do what they do, so along the way, I started studying psychology part time. I felt fortunate that I could study something formally that had always been a kind of hobby to me. After I finished my undergraduate studies I commenced doctoral training in clinical psychology.

I very much like to operate from a theory. One of my first college professors once said "There's nothing as practical as a good theory. If a theory's not good in practice, then it's not a good theory." That idea has stuck with me. I've never been very comfortable with being told what to do. I much prefer people to explain the reasoning or rationale behind a particular approach and then leave it up to me to figure out how I might translate those ideas into practice. As I've sought to understand why people do what they do, I've become interested in different ideas. I have had experience or training in Applied Behavior Analysis; Family Therapy; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; Glasser's Reality Therapy, Choice Theory (called Control Theory when I learned about it) and Quality Management; Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy; and Neurolinguistic Programming.

That does not mean that I am eclectic. I don't know *how* to be eclectic. Each theoretical explanation implies a particular state of the world that is different from other theoretical explanations. How can you blend an idea that says "things are *this* way" with an idea that says "no, they're *that* way"? At a theoretical level I think of eclecticism as an impossibility.

Therefore, each time I became interested in a particular theory, I embraced it and fully endorsed it. Sooner or later, though, I found all of these theories wanting. Something didn't make sense, or inconsistencies appeared that I hadn't noticed at first.

And so it was that I came to PCT. I've been learning PCT since 1995 and I still like it as much as I did when I first learned about it. Perhaps one of the things I like most about PCT is that it is the only theory that enables a working model to be built that will function just the way a person does. With PCT I've consistently been able to find the answers to questions I was looking for, and I have been able to use the theory as a framework to develop questions I hadn't thought of and to seek answers to them. PCT is the scientific foundation of everything in this book.

This book describes a way of working with folk who come to you with psychological problems that they can't seem to sort out themselves. Before you start the book I thought it might be helpful to let you know some things to be aware of.

I'd like this book to be a resource for anybody who is interested in improving their effectiveness in psychotherapy by learning MOL. I've not written this book to persuade you that you *should* become an MOL psychotherapist, rather, I've written it to help you improve your practices on the assumption that you've already decided you want to get better at MOLing. If you still need convincing about the value of MOL, this book might not provide you with what you require.

Throughout the text I use the term "psychotherapy" as an umbrella term to include all those interactions where a person with the relevant training meets with other people to assist them to overcome problems of a psychological nature. I'm using the term "psychotherapy," therefore, to mean therapy that is of a psychological nature. I am going to use "psychotherapist" to mean a person who uses this kind of therapy, although the person might also be called a counselor, therapist, psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, clinical nurse specialist, mental health worker, or some other term.

Two other terms I use liberally throughout the book are "accuracy" and "precision." Their meanings are very similar. The website [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) includes the word "exactness" in the meanings of both terms. But they are different in an important way. For example, I could tell you that Mr. Joseph Banks lives in England, or I could tell you that he lives at number 17 Cherry-Tree Lane, London. The two addresses are both accurate, but the second address is more precise than the first. If I told you that he lives at 24 Arch Street, Philadelphia, that is also more precise than saying that he lives in England, but one of the two statements cannot be accurate. Both precision and accuracy are important for science. I think that a theory that is more precise and accurate warrants more attention than a theory that is less precise and accurate. In my copy of *Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber, 1995, p. 756) the definition of "stimulus" begins this way: "Attempting to provide a precise definition for this term has led many psychologists to grief. Since it is the primary term in the theoretical orientation that has, historically, been regarded as one of the most objective yet produced by psychology, one would anticipate that there would be a relatively unambiguous definition for it or, barring that, at least an agreed-upon manner of usage. Alas, neither is to be found."

In *Behavior: The Control of Perception* (Powers, 1973, 2005, p. 283), Powers defines “control” like this: “Achievement and maintenance of a preselected perceptual state in the controlling system, through actions on the environment that also cancel the effects of disturbances.” It seems to me that “control” is defined more precisely than “stimulus,” so I would consider that theories about control would warrant more attention than theories about stimuli. Bourbon and Powers (1993), [reprinted in Runkel (2005)] compared the perceptual control model with a stimulus-response model and a cognitive model. In the final phase of their study they reported correlations of 0.296 and 0.385 for the stimulus-response model; 0.119 and 0.151 for the cognitive model; and 0.996 and 0.969 for the perceptual control model. I regard correlations in the order of 0.90 as being more accurate than correlations in the order of 0.10 to 0.40, so I think the perceptual control model warrants more attention than the stimulus-response model and the cognitive model.

At times I say things more than once. Some things I repeat on several occasions. When information is repeated you can assume it’s because I consider the point important enough to say again in a different way or in a different context. I’m hoping that repeated mutterings will facilitate your learning of, what seem to me to be—at least at this moment—the essentials of MOL.

As I said, I prefer to work from theory to practice, and so this book is divided into two sections. Section One explains theoretical principles which underpin MOL and the implications that PCT has for the way psychological problems are conceptualized. It’s sort of the “why” of the book, if you like, and pretty much follows on from what Powers introduced in the Foreword. If what you read about the theory interests you, lots more information is provided on the CD that accompanies this book. Section Two is the “how” of the book. It explains MOL and provides you with information and examples to help you learn the method.

The “how” section of the book does not provide lists of things to do or not to do. Rather than specifying what you should do in any given situation, I’ve suggested the attitudes or purposes that you’ll need in order to use this approach. More than anything, the method I describe is a state of mind, a point of view, a way of understanding the world in general and psychological problems in particular. I reckon if you learn the attitude you’ll be able to decide for yourself what

you need to do at any particular time. I certainly provide examples of questions that I ask and procedures that I use, but these examples are provided as only some of many possibilities. They should not be taken as examples of some particular configuration of words that makes the difference. What you should get from them is the intent behind the words. Again, this reflects my preference for grasping principles and learning on my own.

To promote ease of readability I've opted to not refer to "him or her," but have instead used people's names when I provide examples or otherwise explain something that I'm writing about. Although the examples have been developed from my experience with this approach, the names aren't meant to refer to any particular individual.

Another readability tip concerns the term "MOL." When I read or say MOL I say the three letters separately as in M.O.L., I don't say it as the word "mol" as in a word that rhymes with "doll." This point might be useful at various times throughout the book when you read MOL the way I use this term.

At various times throughout the book I'll tell you that people like Powers or Bourbon said certain things. Whenever a name is mentioned, but a publication is not associated with the name at that point, you can assume that I obtained that particular information through personal communication.

At the end of each chapter I'll provide a brief summary of the topics I covered. I'll also highlight what the big deal of that chapter was and mention what the next chapter is about.

That should get us started . . .