

Beyond Psychotherapy

**123 Life-Changing Ideas for
People Who Will Never Go to
Therapy**

Dr. Don N. Bacchus

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Don N. Bacchus is both a clinical psychologist and a school psychologist. He has taught and practiced psychology for over twenty-five years. Dr. Bacchus received his graduate training in psychology at Andrews University in Michigan and at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. He also completed two internships—one in clinical psychology and the other in school psychology. Dr. Bacchus passed the National Licensing Board Examination in Professional Psychology in 1983 and entered private practice as a clinical psychologist. He has also served as a school psychologist since 1979. Dr. Bacchus has taught university psychology classes since 1980. Currently, Dr. Don N. Bacchus resides in Orlando, Florida where he is a School Psychologist for the Orange County Public Schools. He is also an adjunct instructor in psychology at the University of Central Florida.

INTRODUCTION

This book is a compilation of professional opinions based on many years of clinical experience in the field of psychology. Specifically, this is a manual for the psychological development of all people. This material may also be used as a supplementary text for university courses or seminars in psychology. For every serious psychology student, it is a “must read.” It is also my hope that this volume will serve as a consultation manual for a program of mental health services in the schools. Our country has a golden opportunity to help save our children through a direct program of prevention delivered within the schools--where we have access to all children and their families. The concepts outlined in this book should be taught to every child. Remember, every criminal in our society was once a first grader. This book is also relevant for parents. The material is brief and should be read at least once a month. Take these concepts in, own them, and live them out in your life. You will become a new person.

THE CHALLENGE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

For a variety of reasons, many people will never benefit from psychotherapy. First of all, there is a great deal of stigma surrounding psychotherapy. Many people will never go to therapy because they feel that it is a sign of weakness and it makes them feel defective and ashamed. Secondly, psychotherapy is very costly. Even with insurance coverage, most people cannot afford to pay for therapy.

Thirdly, if you look beyond the aura that surrounds psychotherapists, you will realize that there may be few, if any, great therapists. When you strip psychotherapists of the halos surrounding them, you will realize that what they say is mostly common sense and no great revelation.

Psychotherapists are human. They function with psychopathology too. In fact, a high percentage of people who end up in the field of psychology and counseling have a history of psychological disorder. It is a false assumption that the professional is competent and healthy and that the client is incompetent and ill. When a client fails to benefit from therapy, the competence of the therapist should be called into question.

Be warned, there are many pseudo-psychologists out there. Real, life-changing psychotherapy is very difficult to learn and very difficult to practice. It takes great training, extensive experience, as well as psychological wholeness to become a great psychotherapist. It takes great dedication to humanity and superior ability to feel and bear pain to become a great psychotherapist. Great psychotherapy is practiced down in the trenches where the weak struggle to exist. Great psychotherapy has to do with the exploration of the human psyche and the reconstruction of human psychological functioning. This is a most difficult task.

Fourthly, the process of psychotherapy is often contaminated by the payment of money. You are actually paying someone to listen to you, analyze you, give you

insight, and like you. Something has to be wrong with such an arrangement. As soon as money gets into the picture, psychotherapy becomes a business for profit.

We have been conditioned by society to look outside of ourselves for healing or to take medication at the first sign of distress. When, in our history, did we come to believe that there are people out there skilled and clever enough to heal us? We need to give up our dependency and instead take personal responsibility for our overall health. The human body is a wonderful machine that attempts to physically heal itself on its own or with minimal intervention. Likewise, the human psyche will attempt to heal itself on its own or with minimal intervention. When it comes to psychotherapy, we continue to fool ourselves and waste precious time. We have not been taught how to heal ourselves from within ourselves. We have not been taught how to live. We have much more ability and inner strength than we realize. The good news is that on our own, we can learn to be our own healer.

I have been involved in the practice of psychology for over twenty-five years. After all these years, I have come to the conclusion that the best service I can provide to others is to teach them to take personal responsibility for their lives and to become their own healer. This book is both a preventive measure and an enhancement tool. It is written primarily for all the people who will never go to therapy.

THE FAILURE OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is hardly a science. Psychological theory was invented by bright people who were keen observers of human behaviors. Many psychological concepts were developed from the study of animals. For legal and ethical reasons, we cannot conduct experiments on human subjects. Psychology is, therefore, mostly theory. The findings of psychology are only rough guesses regarding human functioning. In addition, it is questionable whether or not old psychological concepts truly apply to the realities of modern day life.

Psychology has not made the world a better place mostly because we have emphasized intervention over prevention. Unfortunately, prevention is not profitable. We have pursued monetary profit through diagnosis and treatment instead of teaching people how to live. We have recklessly placed labels on humans and kept them in so-called therapeutic environments for our own job security, financial profit, and sense of political power. Listening to people, interpreting what they say, and giving them insight may be more a program of dependency than growth. There is a saying, "If you give a person a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." It is more important to give people a prevention and enhancement tool to facilitate their psychological growth, than to keep them weak and dependent. It is my belief that humans have a great innate capacity to heal themselves.

When you consider the present level of national wars, crime, imprisonment, racism, poverty, drug abuse, domestic violence, suicide, homicide, school violence, child abuse, school dropouts, and school failure, you realize that psychology has failed. Rehabilitation efforts have failed. Look at the news. The prison system has been mostly failure. Criminals re-offend. With all the psychology in this country, we have not succeeded in helping slow learners or behavior

disordered children find success. Consider the rate of school failure and the rate of school dropout. Many classroom teachers are burnt out. They are not psychologically healthy enough to properly nurture students. In fact classroom teachers need to make their physical and psychological health a major priority. School administrators and parents should become allies with teachers to help them improve their own mental health for the benefit of all students.

In regards to psychiatry, it makes no sense to label humans, feed them poison in the form of drugs, and keep them coming back for more. Feeding drugs to children is profitable for both professionals and parents. Professionals make money and the parents have less work to do. It is so much easier to define a child's problem as physical and innate than to take parental responsibility and blame for some of the child's problems. It is easier to give a child a magic pill that will change his feelings and behaviors than to do the hard work of parenting and the hard work of emotional and behavioral management. It is a form of laziness. In addition, medication covers up a child's true personality, making it more difficult for the child to find his or her true self. Instead of giving drugs to your children, work with a professional who is interested in prevention and wholesome interventions such as well selected nutritional supplements.

Over my many years of practicing psychology, I have completed thousands of psychological evaluations and consultations. I have only found a handful of children who, in my professional opinion, were severe enough to warrant medication use. However, in regards to this matter, it is my professional opinion that medication may be a necessary tool in treating conditions such as severe psychotic disorder, severe post-trauma, and severe biological depression. Stop and think about it nationally. For all the psychology that is paid for, is our country a better place? You be the judge. Within your own hands you have the power to heal yourself.

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MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY

Be your own healer and gain mastery over your anxiety. All humans experience anxiety. In fact, anxiety is our basic problem. We experience anxiety when we come to realize that the world is a dangerous place. We also experience anxiety when we experience bad urges which, if acted out, can lead to bad consequences. In addition, we experience anxiety in our minds as we wrestle with right versus wrong. Anxiety will affect us in social relationships, at work, and even when we drive. It takes away our self-confidence and leaves us living in a fog. Since anxiety is the basic problem, we need to focus on acknowledging it and managing it. Make this a major goal in your life. Manage your anxiety skillfully. Remind yourself that you need to keep anxiety at mild to moderate levels. Do not over-react and do not worry so much about the future. Live in the here and now. Stay calm. Bring the anxiety level down. Do not neglect daily exercise for it is one of the keys to managing your anxiety. Practice slow deep breathing. Listen to soothing music and engage in relaxing activities such as swimming. Remember to talk to yourself and find time to play. You are capable and you are not alone in the world. Accept what you cannot change and be at peace. Since anxiety is the fundamental problem, schools should regard anxiety in children as a more important priority than learning problems. Many diagnosed ADHD children are simply children with high anxiety. If you take care of the anxiety, learning will take care of itself.

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REALIZE THAT EVERYONE HAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Whether you were born weak or born strong, everyone has at least one psychological problem. Yes, no one is one hundred percent psychologically whole. Psychologists themselves have psychological problems. Think of yourself as a good person with a psychological deficit or two. But remember, you are not your psychopathology. Do not let it consume you. Do not let it define you. Acknowledge your psychological problem as a companion that lives with you. If you experience depression, acknowledge and greet your companion on a daily basis. Work around your depression by sticking to a plan designed by you. This plan may include proper sleep, exercise, good nutrition, social contact, leisure activities and effective self-talk. You may have to learn to accept and live with a measure of depression. You should learn to function with some psychological discomfort. You should learn to bear the pain of your existence with courage.

STAY PHYSICALLY WELL

Invest in your physical health. Exercise is the key. In addition, eat nutritious food and get sufficient sleep. Make your physical health your most important priority. Discipline yourself to do it. Avoid excessive sugar, excessive salt, and excessive fat. Do not eat junk food. Do not overeat. Avoid restaurant food. Although tasty and attractive, restaurant food is likely to contain excessive sugar, excessive salt, and excessive fat. Learn to cook fresh and simple foods such as stir-fry. Cook often and avoid rancid leftover food. Grow pesticide-free vegetables around the house. Drink pure water. Do not use drugs of any kind including alcohol. They are all poisons. If you put poison into your body you will eventually become poisoned. Stay physically well and be a great example of good health for your children. When you are physically healthy, you will have more energy and more self-confidence. Pure water, nutritious food, regular exercise, and adequate sleep are the keys to health. Daily exercise stimulates the release of the essential hormones in the body that are important to health and a sense of well being. Listen to your body and let it speak to you. Your body will tell you what it needs.

BE RATIONAL AND MAKE SENSE

By nature, humans are more emotional than rational. It is our emotions that get us in trouble most of the time. If you desire to live a successful life, you must dedicate yourself to the principle of being rational and always making sense. When you make sense, you will remain grounded in reality. You will also become mentally strong and your coping skills will improve. Teach your children to make sense. Day and night tell yourself to make sense. Be a good thinker. Think your way through life and use your emotions to feel the journey. Take time to think. Do not get carried away by your emotions. Ask yourself and ask your children, "Does it make sense?" When you are dealing with real life situations, do not make things up. Be rational. Look at cause and effect. Dedicate yourself to reality even though reality might be painful. Give up your irrational beliefs. If you don't have the answers to life's difficult questions just say that you don't know. Do not simply make things up just because it makes you feel better. Not knowing is part of the pain and mystery of our existence. If you are considering life after death, you should feel free to imagine all that is comforting and pleasurable. However, in dealing with real life you should always be rational and you should always make sense.

DO NOT MISPERCEIVE

Accurate perception is dependent on our sense organs and our brain working together. The brain interprets what we sense. Brain interpretation is influenced by our sensory ability, by our intelligence, and by our past experiences. Try to be objective. Make a determined effort to perceive things accurately. Be a good listener and a great observer. Listen to what is not said and observe what is not obvious. Do not misperceive. As you learn to focus, concentrate, and perceive accurately, your confidence will grow. Live in the real world. Do not practice denial. Do not make things up. See things for what they are. Accurate perception can be developed through daily and deliberate practice. Teach your children to perceive accurately by asking them “Are you sure?” Remember, reality for all of us is what we perceive reality to be. Therefore, strive to perceive accurately. By perceiving Accurately, you will get closer to reality.

MAKE GOOD CHOICES

In every situation make a good choice. Consider the risks and consider the consequences. Engage your brain and not your emotions. Take into consideration your beliefs and the principles you have chosen to live by. Consider right from wrong and think about the possible results. See the outcome in your mind. This is real power. Get in the habit of making good choices. Take pride in making good choices. Build yourself a reputation for being a great choice maker. You will soon discover that you are right a high percentage of the time all because you made good choices. Making good choices will improve your self-confidence. Give your children options now and then. This will provide them with valuable practice at making good choices. Teach them that life is a game of trading one thing for another. It takes knowledge, good thinking skills, and self-discipline to make a good choice. Close your eyes and anticipate what you might do in a variety of situations. Would you run, scream, or fight back? Practice. Practice. Practice. Everything comes with practice. Remember, no person is an island. We do not live only unto ourselves. The good choices that you make will help you and help others. The bad choices that you make will hurt you and hurt others. Therefore, make good choices.

BE COMPETENT

Competence is the opposite of weakness and dependency. Cultivate a skill. Be good at something. In fact, become an expert in your area of interest and skill. If you are a dishwasher, become the best dishwasher in the world. Be very good at what you do. When you are good at what you do, your sense of self will improve. Read and take additional training to improve your skills. In addition to giving you more options, a good education will improve your self-confidence. As an adult, you may have to try a number of activities before you are able to figure out the things you are good at. When you are good at what you do, you will gain self-respect and gain the respect of others. You will also grow in confidence. All caregivers of children should ask themselves, “What is this child good at?” Then, set about to help that child become better at what he or she is already good at.

HAVE A CERTAINTY

Your social support system should include at least one person who is, beyond the shadow of any doubt, your certainty. This person may be a relative or a friend. Be able to identify such a person. Have the courage to say to this person, "You are my certainty." This person will be your rock, your anchor--your certainty. This is someone you trust. This is someone you can count on. This is someone who will be there for you no matter what. Do not underestimate the importance of this psychological attachment. Once you have a certainty--and you may have more than one certainty--you do not need to trust too many other people. Most of the people in the world should not be trusted anyway because they are an unknown quantity. Beyond your certainty, you will have a circle made up of family, friends, and acquaintances with whom you should be somewhat guarded. This is the reality of life. You do not need to trust everyone to be psychologically healthy. This is a new psychology of living in the real world.

DECIDE WHAT'S FOR YOU

As humans, we are all different and we need to each decide who we really are and what makes us tick. Simply put, be sure you know what's for you and what's not for you. Do not copy. Be true to yourself. There are many voices seeking to be recognized. If golf is for you then play golf. If golf is not for you do not play golf. Take a good look at yourself and figure out how you will live your life and how you will spend your time. In fact, one of the major keys to successful living is the proper use of time. Engage in activities that are wholesome and enjoyable. Ask yourself "What's for me?" If a particular activity is for you, by all means pursue it. Once you figure out the activities that will be included in your life, stick to your plan. You will experience a reduction in social pressure, less stress, and great joy.

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HAVE A PASSION

Have a passion. In fact, have several passions. A passion is what you do for fun. It might be a sport or it might be cooking or gardening. A passion should be all joy. A passion should come naturally. As an adult, you need to discover your true passion by remembering the activities that made you happy at a younger age. In addition, consider your natural abilities and aptitudes. A passion should not bring you frustration. In the end, you must be true to yourself. Preferably, your passion should involve other people. Parents should help children to develop a passion. In fact, as a parent, when you realize that your child has a passion for something that is wholesome, you should encourage and support that activity. It will bring them great joy and it will increase their self confidence. Passion for a wholesome activity is a major contribution to one's mental health.

MANAGE YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Gain mastery over your negative emotions. Gain mastery over anxiety, sadness, and anger. In the first place, be able to quickly identify the specific emotion you are experiencing. Secondly, stay in control. Do not be afraid of these emotions--they are the rich and real part of you. Try to figure out exactly what triggered a particular emotion. It might be a specific event or something you were told. Be determined to reduce the intensity of negative emotions by effective self-talk, distracting activities such as exercise, and appropriate action such as walking away from the situation. Managing your negative emotions is a way of choosing your attitude. Never take your anger out on others. Many people are in prison today because they were not able to control their rage. Never display anger in the presence of children. Declare yourself the master of your negative emotions. If you do not control your negative emotions, your negative emotions will control you.

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LIVE THE TRUTH AND TELL THE TRUTH

Always tell the truth and live the truth. Do not lie to others and do not lie to yourself. Your sins will find you out. The truth will set you free. Live truthfully. You will have little for which to apologize. Your anxiety level will be greatly reduced. Whether it is a small or large matter, make it a life-long habit to tell the truth. Tell the truth about yourself to yourself. You are a good person. Good people tell the truth and live the truth. Telling the truth is a great example for your children. In the end, whatever you undertake, truth is in everyone's best interest. If you continually say that an apple is an orange and that an orange is an apple, the day will come when you will not be able to distinguish apples from oranges. Live the truth and tell the truth.

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MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR PAST

You must, at some point, put your past on trial. You will have a prosecution and you will have a defense. You must determine guilt and innocence. Take responsibility where you must and accept your victimization as you should. Learn all that you can about yourself. Look at all the factors that have shaped your life. If you have experienced some type of trauma, tell your story over and over again to the person you have chosen to be your certainty. At the end of this process, you must surrender to the past and reach a state of calm acceptance. Be angry if you need to be angry but then get over the past and go forward. There is a long road ahead. Who told you life was easy? Make peace with your past. Let your abuse and trauma be an explanation, not an excuse. You cannot grieve forever. The grieving process must end with an attitude of acceptance and OK-ness. You must continue the journey. Grow up and take responsibility for the rest of your life.

SEE LIFE AS MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM

Tremendous mystery! Life is a great mystery. Accept it as such. There is the mystery of origin and the mystery of destiny. There is the mystery of good and the mystery of evil. There is the mystery of physical attraction between two people. Then there is the mystery of healing. Tremendous mystery! Delight yourself in the great mystery of your existence. Be at home with it. Accept life as a great mystery. Realize that you will never have all the answers. Do not make things up. Understand that you are surrounded by mystery. Do not try to unravel the mysteries of life. Try to become comfortable with the unknown and the mysterious. We are mysterious creatures living mysterious lives in a mysterious environment. How exciting! **Mysterium Tremendum!**

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ACCEPT YOURSELF

Where you do not have a choice, the only other issue is acceptance or rejection. No one chooses their family, their sex, or their race. The opposite of self-acceptance is self-rejection. Self-hate is the most disabling and destructive posture that you can assume. You are who you are. Accept and value yourself. View yourself as one of a kind--special and unique. Yes, it is true. There is only one you in the whole wide world. Do not get caught up in wishful thinking, wishing you were someone else. For the rest of your life you are going to be you. Help children to feel special by pointing out their special qualities and by telling them that they are loved and valued. Accept your strengths and your weaknesses. There is something very special about you. Discover it. If you do not accept and value yourself, it will be impossible to accept and value others.