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Influencing Others to Change

This book is about getting people to change ... something—a behavior, an attitude, a product, a service, their relationship to or with you. You want someone to do something different from what they were doing a few minutes ago. You want someone to say yes to you, now. In order for that to consistently happen it would probably be a good idea to know what it is that makes people tick. I want you to know precisely what it is that gets people to not only say yes but, if necessary, say yes all the time!

My life has been about helping people change and teaching others to change people. It's exciting, it's fun, and I've been fortunate enough to discover many keys that other promoters of influence have neglected to look for. I've also been fortunate enough to have access to a world of research from both the academic and real (i.e., private sector) worlds. The process of causing change, getting people to question the status quo, and actually implementing the change in another person's brain is an exciting process.

Short-term decisions of yes or no are much easier than achieving long-term change. Permanent change is difficult. Period. You go to the same grocery store every week. You go to the same gas stations, attend the same

church, take the same route for your daily walk or jog, work out at the same gym . . . well, you get the idea. You do the same things every day, and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, the stability of these behaviors can be very positive indeed! In this book you will learn how to get people to say “yes” to you now . . . and help them change over the long term!

Unfortunately, some of the things that people do are in direct opposition with what we *want* them to do. That’s where influence and persuasion come in handy. Some people smoke cigarettes, do drugs, drink too much, beat their kids, rape, steal, eat too much, hang out with the wrong people in the wrong element, take part in self-destructive behaviors, and fail to act on living what they dream their lives should be about. People universally agree that these are things that need to change in themselves and in others. Agreement and action, of course, are often not related to each other in reality.

Even when people want change it turns out to be something that people desperately fail at. You’d think that if they *want* to change it would be easy, right? Of course it isn’t that way at all. Why?

The first reason is remarkably simple. Your brain has lots and lots of highways that connect lots and lots of cells. These highways light up with activity every day when you participate in various activities. You think “walk,” and you go for the same walk you always do. When you think “drink,” you will go drink the same liquids you always do. Your brain is literally wired through all of your previous behavior to do exactly what it has in the past. That wiring rarely changes, except by lack of use of the highway system. However, new wiring (new highways) can come about through repetition of new behaviors and through repetition of thoughts, though with murkier results than actual behaviors such as intentionally taking a walk on a different path every day for a few weeks, intentionally eating a new food every day for a few weeks, intentionally taking part in any new behavior every day for a few weeks.

It used to be said that a new habit takes 21 days to form. It now appears that it takes five days to form a new habit that is repeated daily (i.e., to create new neural pathways in the brain). Unfortunately, creating a new habit rarely if ever erases an old habit. That means choice continues to be involved in everyday decisions and change, even though there is a new highway. Getting someone to not eat junk food today is fairly easy; getting

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the person to do it for a lifetime is another thing altogether. Getting the dream date isn't as hard as you might think. But getting the person to say yes to a longer-term commitment is another thing altogether.

With this in mind it can be understood that there is no reason to assume that people will be motivated, after today, to perform a newly desired behavior, regardless of what it is. The easy shift back to the strong, well-traveled neural pathways in the brain (which essentially project themselves into your external world) is not only possible, it is likely. Therefore, the person who wants to quit smoking, start eating better, or change any behavior probably won't, regardless of the motivational device, unless it is consciously and intentionally repeated time after time and day after day for months, at which point it can compete as the more likely to be followed pathway.

The status quo is the status quo for just this reason. That which is familiar is the path of least resistance. This is also why the brain reacts so strongly with a negative response to all but the most familiar requests or behaviors. It takes enormous initial effort to change because one literally must forge new highways in the brain. Once formed, the highways must be strengthened through regular usage and maintained by even further usage.

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Sit down for this one (the second reason change isn't easy): People don't know what they want, don't know how they will feel when they get it, and don't really know themselves. What does this mean for change?

We each have a conscious mind and a nonconscious mind. Even with hypnosis, you can't really have two-way communication with the nonconscious mind in any effective and reliable fashion, but you *can* communicate with the conscious mind. Even more interesting is that the conscious and nonconscious minds appear to have significantly different personality characteristics, attitudes, and motivations.

The nonconscious mind is not a six-year-old child, as has so often been speculated. In fact, sometimes the nonconscious mind is far more useful than its conscious counterpart—but not always.

The conscious mind is able to compute, calculate, compare, contrast, and perform all kinds of impressive cognitive functions. The nonconscious

mind makes rapid-fire choices (though rarely decides between two options) under stress, which are more often right than wrong when there is significant experience in a situation (fighting fires, surgery, combat, etc.). The nonconscious also tends to stereotype and categorize people right down to whether someone you meet is like someone you knew in the past and if so assigning them the same traits as the person you once knew. *The nonconscious mind doesn't think per se; it simply does.* It experiences a situation and produces some behavior. Objections in sales situations almost always come from this part of the brain.

To override this behavior would take conscious effort on your client's behalf. That usually doesn't happen. More typically the conscious mind will create a reason for performing some behavior, when it really has no clue why the body is eating, going to bed, getting in the car, or taking an exit.

The nonconscious mind simply directs the body to act. Its force is usually strong and difficult to change in the short term. Because, as a rule, the nonconscious mind is rooted in deep and old brain function, it doesn't vocalize its opinions in a rational way. It simply reacts. Generally the nonconscious mind acts in a way that would be consistent with past behaviors in similar situations, meaning that it could save your life or it could overlook important new information and accidentally drive you to your demise. It is a holdover from our evolutionary history. It (the nonconscious) appears to drive almost all animal behavior, with conscious mind functions being limited to a few different kinds of animals.

The nonconscious mind makes rapid-fire choices. It also tends to stereotype and categorize people right down to whether someone you meet is like a person you once knew.

The nonconscious mind deals with now. The conscious mind deals with the future. The nonconscious mind is *rigid*. The conscious mind is *flexible*. The nonconscious mind is sensitive to negative information. The conscious mind is sensitive to positive information. The nonconscious is a pattern detector. The conscious is an after-the-fact checker. The nonconscious mind is multisystemic. The conscious mind is a single system.

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Conscious Mind

Future.
Flexible.
Sensitive to positive
information.
After-the-fact checker.
Single system.

Nonconscious Mind

Now.
Rigid.
Sensitive to negative
information.
Pattern detector.
Multisystemic.

Because the brain develops these two substantially distinct minds, it's important to realize that both minds have typical behaviors, and those behaviors are often at odds with each other. The conscious mind may want to be accurate whereas the nonconscious mind wants to feel good.

Internal conflict in most people is very real and very normal. Typically we consciously have an objective or goal (lose weight, get a different job, start your own business, begin a true personal-development phase in your life). However, the nonconscious mind learned early on to fear the unknown. It's a simple survival mechanism. To walk where we have walked before is generally safe. To stretch our boundaries is often something that seems risky to the nonconscious self, and, therefore, the very idea of these changes can literally feel bad. That gut instinct is probably wrong but that is what the survival mechanism in the brain sends to the body: fear, anxiety, maybe even panic.

The conscious, rational self, which hates the present job, the weak state of personal development, or the fat body, knows that change should take place, but to actually commit to a plan to overcome the status quo where the fear is present is daunting and seemingly counterintuitive.

Complete strangers are almost as good at predicting our behavior as we are ourselves.

Therefore, it is critical to *evaluate the emotions of the moment* or the day and discover if there is a *legitimate, rational signal* that your brain is relaying to you. Or is the brain simply telling you it is afraid, and the fear is false evidence appearing real (fear)? If you decide (consciously) that the mind

and body are feeling afraid without good cause for the situation at hand, realize that it will take some significant amount of time to overcome the fear of the situation. It certainly won't go away in a minute, an hour, or a day. Typically it is necessary to wire in a completely new set of responses to the current situation and fight through fear and negative emotions every day until new levels of comfort can be achieved.

One of the great problems of trying to know yourself is that you really can't completely know yourself. Study after study shows that complete strangers are almost as good at predicting our behavior as we are ourselves. We think we know ourselves, but we really don't know ourselves as well as we would like to. Because of the way the brain works, though, if we don't like what we see ourselves doing and thinking, we can change. It is a slow process and often difficult, but once change becomes the status quo, it becomes rigid. So select well.

Two Personalities?

Are we really two personalities woven into one person?

I confess, it's a funny thing: The personality of the nonconscious mind correlates to a person's behavior and the person's conscious mind correlates to a person's behavior—but the conscious mind and nonconscious mind of that person don't correlate to each other! Gulp. That's why people say things like, "I don't know," "I have to think about it," "I'm not sure what I want to do."

People typically look to make sense of themselves and the world around them. Because we all do and say things that truly surprise us, we must construct (fabricate) a narrative (story) that makes sense of those behaviors that conflict with our intentions. The rationales and explanations help us put the incongruency behind us and move on to other things.

What makes understanding ourselves and others even more difficult is the painfully distorted memories we all carry in the three-pound universe. The brain simply isn't a video recorder that records events. The brain is a vast array of storehouses and interpreting functions that constantly store, re-store, interpret, and reinterpret our memories and beliefs. False memories are so common that almost every conversation of any length includes reference to at least one memory that never happened.

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Recognizing these two defective elements of the human experience (our suspect memory and the dual nature of our personality(ies)), one can understand the arguments, the fights, and the butting of heads that take place in relationships and communication in general between people who have lived through the same events and remembered and interpreted them so differently.

Recent research does show that there is some predictability in how we will respond to other people. For example, a person who is fond of her sister will tend to be fond of people who exhibit behaviors similar to those of the sister.

How do you actually come to know yourself? Pay attention to your behavior in any given situation and you learn who you are. However, even that is suspect because we don't see ourselves as clearly as we see others. As mentioned, current research reveals that we are better judges of others' future behavior than we are of our own. We tend to see ourselves in a much better light than we see others, and that light creates a halo effect around what most of us believe about ourselves. We tend to see others more accurately.

The brain is a vast array of storehouses and interpreting functions.

Real estate agents observe the lack of self-knowledge in others every day. They listen while their clients describe the exact house they want. The agents then show them several houses that their clients love and one that they eventually buy that has little in common with what the individuals detailed just hours or days before! Real estate agents figured it out a long time ago: Buyers have no clue what they really want.

And when we do see ourselves behave in some fashion, we often have no idea why we did what we did. A research project had women approach men on a somewhat dangerous footbridge and start a conversation. The same women later approached men seated on a bench away from the footbridge. The results were that 65 percent of the men who were approached on the footbridge asked for a date, while only 30 percent of those on the bench asked for a date. Arousal was attributed incorrectly to the woman on the

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bridge instead of the actual anxiety-provoking feelings that the man felt on the bridge.

Unfortunately, we don't have the ability to access the reasons we do these kinds of things, and observation helps only to some degree. Our need to find a reason for behavior, any reason, helps us make sense of our world and make us happy, even if it isn't accurate.

And what about those faced with difficult decisions in life? Beginning or ending a relationship? Buying a business or not? Buying your product or service!?

The research is compelling. After initially analyzing the problem once, the individual stands a far better chance of making a good determination than another individual who ponders for days, weeks, or months. This is true even when people write out their reasons for their decisions on paper or on a computer. In comparative studies, individuals seem to make better decisions when gathering enough information, thinking about it, and then deciding versus writing all the reasons for and against an idea. (Ben Franklin is rolling over in his grave . . . and I'm sure I will, too!)

So, with this rather bleak picture of how poorly we make decisions and how poorly we know each other, what is the answer? How can you get people to say yes to you now and in the future?

It appears that going out into the future and speculating on what events and experiences might take place is the best option for creating the changes necessary when conflicted. To be sure, we can't accurately predict how we will feel in the future. This has been shown in volumes of studies. However, we can gain foresight by specifically seeing ourselves in future situations and determining what course(s) of action will ensure the success.

For years it was thought that journaling was a grand way to determine insight and learn about ourselves. And this is true as long as we do not journal after particularly negative or traumatic experiences that will later taint the story of our lives into being something it was/is not. Instead, it's best to journal on a consistent basis and describe events and experiences with the realization that negative emotions happen daily in everyone and that in itself is not necessarily a bad thing as long as action is taken on those states to improve the quality of life each and every day. Numerous studies have shown that people who think about the negative emotions that have been recorded actually end up far worse off than they would have had they not reviewed the emotions of the past. Such is the nature of writing history

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and then rewriting it without the benefit of all the other experiences that happened that day/week/month/year. Result: These people tend to predict a more negative future for themselves than those who do not ruminate. I bring up this crucial point because a lot of us sell products or services that can develop a track record. A car can appear to be reliable or unreliable, but if you just had a minor breakdown today, you will certainly be seeing the car as much less reliable than you had seen it previously.

After initially analyzing the problem once, the individual stands a far better chance of making a good determination than the other individual who ponders for days, weeks, or months.

In the final analysis, the road to changing the self (yours or someone else's) is about creating behavioral change first, which will almost always lead to attitudinal change. In plain English, that means you have to get people to *do* something if you want them to say yes.

Three Ways to Change

I want to share with you three ways to change that no one wants you to know about.

What do some major corporations, all military leaders, and many major religions know that most other people don't?

The military leadership of every world government discovered this first factor ages ago. Every successful religious and spiritual organization found out how to utilize this factor in past millennia. In recent history, beyond the military and spiritual organizations, some major corporations have discovered how to thoroughly and completely change people, modify behavior, and alter attitudes. What's the first secret? Imagine: boot camp.

You arrive. They cut your hair (if you have any), issue clothing conforming to a specific standard, the same cut and color as everyone else's. You have a new place to eat and you are told specific times to wake up, eat, and sleep. Your activities are dictated from the beginning of the day to the

end of the day. You are looking at dozens of other faces that you have never seen before. *Your environment has changed.*

There will be phone calls home once each week and you will not be using a telephone or the Internet for the balance of the days. There is very little contact with the outside world.

All of this is necessary to rapidly change your loyalties, behavior, and attitudes so that if you are forced into high-stress situations, like battle, your behavior will be predictable and manageable . . . and you will stay alive. You will be taught to watch out for everyone else in the group, and they will be there to support you. An interdependent relationship is being created. There are no independent relationships and there are no independent thinkers allowed.

All of the needs of the military require rapid change, rapid behavior modification, and a rapid restructuring of beliefs. The same changes are facilitated in some large corporations, the large church, some schools, and a few other groups throughout society. The model is powerful and is effective with all but the most stubbornly nonconformist individuals.

The three overlooked principles to change yourself and others begin with changing a person's environment. Humans, like animals, interact with and respond to their environment far more than we are aware of at the conscious level.

- We act very differently in church than we do . . .
- . . . at the office, and we act differently at the office than we do . . .
- . . . at the football game, and we act differently at the football game than we do . . .
- . . . at the dinner table in our homes each night and than we do . . .
- . . . in our hotel rooms.

Why? Cultural rules dictate our behavior at church and in the office. Groupthink or social influence comes into play at the football game as well as the church and office. Personal relationship dynamics enter into the mix at the dinner table, joining the other environments. Finally, the hotel room is most interesting because you are a stranger in an environment without a leader or group to conform to, and often you are by yourself. Thus you are able to discover more about the true nature of who you are because you are most definitely curious about your environment and not quite certain what

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to do with that environment. This leaves behavior largely unpredictable for you—but very predictable for the hotel chain.

Cultural rules dictate our behavior in public.

You don't know how you will behave, but the hotel does. The hotel knows what you will do (and charges you handsomely for it). The manager knows you will do at least two of three things in your room that will generate a profit on most stays:

1. You will use the telephone (that's why local phone calls are \$1.50).
2. You will eat a snack (the minibar prices for food and drink about eight times retail prices).
3. You will watch a movie (priced at three times the price of a video).

You may not know that you are going to do these things. In fact, you may bring your own cell phone, your own snacks, and your own DVD player or your computer, and you still utilize the hotel's services, and they know you will. *They know you better than you do, because the environment stimulates behavior.*

Key: If you want to change your own or someone else's behavior, *the first thing you can often do is change the environment*. If you can control the environment, you can typically predict or create a specific behavior.

It is known how people will behave in church, at the dinner table, at the office, and in the hotel. Deviations can occur, but behavior is remarkably predictable.

People learn how to behave in all of these environments and then they do behave that way. An extroverted individual will be remarkably compliant in the quiet atmosphere of the library. The introverted person will sing out in church and stand up and cheer at the football game. The behaviors are learned and reinforced. People do what they are told, and when they don't we medicate them so they will comply!

Changing the environment is uniquely powerful in changing behavior. There is no greater single influence. Not genetics, not peer pressure. Not parenting. *The environment stimulates behavior*, and changing behavior is most easily accomplished in a different environment.

And there is more. *The environment can be changed to develop different behaviors*. The positions of chairs, furniture, and decor can be altered, thus changing how much people like each other. These alterations also change how (and how much) people interact, which will directly impact whether people will like each other, be more (or less) anxious, and be more (or less) comfortable.

The colors of carpeting, furniture, and walls all change the perceptions of people in the environment and literally change their behavior.

An interesting element in changing the environment is that it tends to change behavior first, rather than the attitude of the individual. This fact is most profoundly noted in many religious institutions, the military of every government, large corporations, and some schools.

When a person is moved from one environment to another, especially when one is unfamiliar with the new environment, the brain has to change; it enters into a state of flux and typically *becomes more suggestible*.

From the standpoint of your “Self,” this factor can help you determine whether you should remain in the same environment you are in or intentionally change it. From the standpoint of changing the behavior of others, this information helps you know whether you should take a person out to lunch, to dinner, or on a trip—or meet them at an international destination. The further removed from their norm, the more likely it is to gain compliance in most people.

The environment has a dramatic impact on whether someone else will say yes or no to you. It’s the very first indicator that a yes or no is coming. The next indicator is equally controllable: your appearance.