



Changing Inappropriate Behaviour

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Open your eyes, it's all around us – normal people behaving inappropriately. There's the ordinary everyday stuff that we take for granted as part and parcel of normal living – like road rage (most everybody has had a fit of that at some stage). There's the more disturbing like workplace bullying – the WBI-Zogby International's August 2007 survey found that some 54 million Americans – 37% of the US workforce – are subjected to bullying. And, then, there's the heavy stuff, like domestic violence. The American Bar Association believes approximately 2m people are subjected to various forms of domestic violence each year.

But even take a look at the way so-called loved ones talk to each other in public places – I've seen both husbands and wives verbally abuse each other openly in airports, shopping malls, car parks – as if it were just the normal thing to do. I've heard parents admonish their children in ways that will stick in the child's open, sponge-like, mind for life – as if it's just normal parenting. Make no mistake about it, most people, so-called normal people, don't know how to behave themselves – and there's at least a 96% chance that you're normal.

We all know our own inappropriate behaviours – we all have bad habits, things that we know we'd be better off not doing. We all lose our head with people we claim to love. There's not a parent in sight who hasn't screamed at their children – even though all the psychological research shows that those "little" incidents can have a lifelong impact on children. Some may be the workplace bully or, perhaps even more insidious, the boss who manipulates others' lives, believing it to be some sort of power game. Whatever it is, we all behave inappropriately from time to time and we all feel the worse for it.

The problem, however, is that we confuse our behaviour with ourselves. You are not your behaviour. Your behaviour is triggered by your personality – a series of "programs" lodged deeply in your subconscious mind. Those programs were "installed" when you were young and impressionable – in the exact way we've already discussed screaming parents. These programs, taken together, create your perception of who you are, your ideas about your strengths and inadequacies, your personality. Your personality, a set of programs, automatically dictates your behaviour. But, when you realise that all these internal programs were "installed" as a result of external people and events, you realise that your personality isn't you at all. Indeed, as a normal

adult, there isn't a single mannerism, behaviour, habit or turn of phrase that's your own – everything was acquired along the way.

The point is that there is little point in beating ourselves up about our behaviour when we can actually do something to change it. Inappropriate behaviour would simply never happen if people retook control of their own minds and stopped the repetitive running of the same old programs that create the same old behaviours that get most people nowhere. As things stand, the ordinary everyday menu of inappropriate behaviour is triggered automatically by our subconscious programs. This happens because, as normal adults, we are incapable of paying attention to the here and now – incapable of understanding what's actually going on in the present moment and acting appropriately. As a result, our subconscious mind permanently pays attention to our programs and those programs simply continue to dictate our reactive behaviour.

You take back control of your mind – and, therefore, full control over your moment to moment behaviour, by paying attention to the here and now. The good news is that this is not an acquired skill – you already have it. As children, we all gave our undivided attention to what was going on around us – that's how, in fact, our minds were programmed in the first place. When we were young, we experienced the world through our five senses – when we were very young, a new toy was rattled, licked, smelled, turned inside out and upside down as we fully involved all our five senses in the new experience.

We have to become childlike again. I don't mean childish – I mean that we need to re-train ourselves to pay attention to our five senses in the here and now. In doing so, you will begin to become more tuned in to what is actually going on in the present moment – you will experience the ability to take a pause for reflection before you act – you will replace automatic reaction with real action. In doing so, you will take your subconscious mind's attention away from your old, irrelevant programs – your inappropriate behaviour will begin to fade away. And, when you do slip, you will know that it's pointless beating yourself up, it's pointless feeling frustrated – you will know that you must start again, seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling and tasting the here and now.

What all this adds up to is that it's time to call a halt to your inappropriate behaviour – because it's entirely within your own power to do so. It's time to take full responsibility for the only thing, in this life, for which you can be fully responsible – your own state of mind. It's time to behave and act to the very best of your true ability.