Frank has worked for the ABC Printing Company as a set up man for 18 years. He enjoyed his work. He has had a good family life and has basically looked forward to waking up each day regardless of what responsibilities were called for or the type of role that was required. While attempting to lift a crate at work, Frank was momentarily distracted and as a result inadvertently put undue stress on his back. Due to the severity of the pain Frank was sent home for some bed rest. In time, Frank had to call his family doctor due to the persistence of the pain. Initially, Frank was given pain medication and was put on extended medical leave. Frustrated by the pain and the inability to return to work, Frank asked his doctor for a more aggressive form of treatment.

Frank was referred to Dr. Smith, a psychiatrist and director of the Pain Free Comprehensive Pain Clinic. Frank’s pain was thoroughly evaluated and he was placed within an active outpatient program. Accordingly, Frank received a full complement of physical, occupational and behavioral therapies. He was given assignments to perform at home and was told to keep a log of his daily activities. Frank approached these assignments with enthusiasm and always completed the work sometimes even going beyond what was expected. As a result, Frank was considered a model patient. He was strongly motivated to return to his former life style and to get on with his life.

Bill, on the other hand, only worked to earn a living. His marriage had been one that started with infatuation and then evolved into a lackluster relationship riddled with strife and interspersed with occasional periods of intimacy. Frank spent his time at work thinking about lost dreams, anticipating the hunting season and thinking about the girl that he met at the cafeteria. Thus with his thoughts afar, he was not mindful of the weight of a crate when he began to lift it off the ground. He felt something snap and winced at the pain that ensued. Due to the severity of the pain, Bill was sent home for some bed rest. In time, he was advised to keep a diary of his daily activities. Rather than following the therapist’s orders, Bill would go home, watch television, and complain about the therapists and the work he was forced to endure.

Bill is considered a difficult patient. Clearly, he does not exert sufficient effort in his therapies. He dwells on his pain in conversation with his peers in the program and he has a million excuses for failing to keep a log or for not performing his homework during the intervening hours when he is not formally being pushed by his therapists. Bill continues to draw an income while he is at home. He is receiving attention from his family and has a “license” to make demands and to vent at the family for any number of reasons.

In looking at the differences between Frank and Bill, it is clear that Frank is highly motivated to resume his former lifestyle in all of its areas while Bill is motivated to remain exactly like he is. It is, therefore, important to ask why did Frank initially involve himself in work and a lifestyle that was intrinsically satisfying while Bill decided to settle for a job strictly for the external benefits derived.

In order to respond to this question, I would like to take the position of the psychobiologists who maintain that the primary basis for human personality lies within a genetic code which provides the groundwork, in the form of propensities and tendencies, which causes us to respond to the world in one direction rather than another. In effect, the genetic code dictates each person’s capacity to develop certain behaviors and modes of thinking while the environment dictates their expression. The genetic code provides the blueprint with regard to attributes such as, physical appearance, cognitive skills and styles (intellect), and modes of orientation (introversion-extroversion, inner directed-outer directed), as well as the potential for interests, aptitudes, likes and dislikes, but does not predetermine behavior and choices. The choice of a certain vocation, the emergence of certain fears, the enjoyment of food, etc., are more environmentally determined. The genetic code evolving within an environmental code will mature in a manner that either complements its potentials or frustrates it.

An observant parent can recognize that even in early childhood patterns of the genetic code made themselves known through play and conversation. One child, with an interest in mechanical things, enjoys how things come apart and how they can be reconstructed. Another child may show an interest in the experiential aspect of an activity and not care about the why’s and wherefore’s. Yet another child, not interested in the mechanics of an activity, may assume the role of a leader in sports, class government, and so on. In addition to the type of activity, further differentiation can be observed in the manner in which an activity is approached or chosen. The left hemisphere child will have a proclivity for getting involved in verbal or arithmetic subject matter while the right hemisphere child will have inclinations for the non verbal...
spheres such as art, mechanics, gardening, cooking etc. In addition, the former child may like to talk about what he is doing, while the latter may simply perform without the desire for verbal interventions.

Who we are attracted to or are repelled by also appears to be based upon states of being that are not subject to objective explanations just as a perception cannot easily be analyzed. In effect, certain states of mind or being are not open to objective reasoning and judgment but simply exist. If I am looking at a green wall or listening to a dish drop, I would be unable to give reasons for my observations other than to say "I know what I see," or "I know what I hear." In other areas of life we respond to impressions with such terms as taste, attractiveness, interest, comfort, etc. as illustrated in the following examples: Chocolate tastes better than vanilla, red is prettier than blue, Mary is more appealing than Janet, psychology is more interesting than physics, an urban setting is more comfortable than a suburban setting, a luxury sports car is more desirable than a big luxury automobile. While one can offer subjective reasons for making certain choices, in the final analysis the choices are reduced to attractions or detractions.

Thus, when one comes to choosing a vocation, left to the genetic code alone, people would analyze their own individual composite and then seek out a vocation or profession that meets these proclivities or areas of interest. A right hemisphere physician for example, may feel more comfortable doing surgeries or diagnostic work because within these areas he can draw upon internal imaging from sensory and cognitive input rather than relying on the extensive verbalization necessary teaching and doing research. A left hemisphere analyzer may feel more comfortable doing accounting, or putting together a recipe than he would supervising workers or performing routine jobs under someone else's direction. In addition to hemisphere differences, other aspects of the code also need to be taken into consideration such as the sensory hierarchies, modes of approach and hemispheric inclinations. Sensory hierarchies include the mode in which a person is more apt to approach the environment: visually, auditorally or kinesthetically. Stated otherwise, is the person more visual, auditory or kinesthetic. Modes of approach would refer to the type of processing: inductive vs. deductive. These subdivisions within the specific hemispheres added to the aforementioned areas of intrinsic taste create combinations or permutations that can become quite complex and even mind boggling. Ideally, if the choices for vocation, avocation and life in general were left up to the individual, these inclinations would eventually evolve into a way of life that would allow the individual to become a truly self motivating and inner directed adult.

All too often, however, environmental forces, initially in the persona of parent, relative, or significant others, combined with the educational system, cause the developing genetic ego to compromise its choices in order to obtain approval and/or avoid rejection in the form of psychological and/or physical communication. Thus, the male who is interested in ballet, hair design, or cooking may find himself facing derision and scorn from authority figures and peers alike. The female interested in mechanics, or carpentry may not only face similar feelings from authority figures and peers but may also experience rejection from members of the very profession to which she has applied.

Within the job setting, the individual who is very comfortable doing routine tasks may feel compelled to accept a promotion to the position of foreman even though it will mean leaving his area of genetic comfort. Such an individual may be attracted by the added status of the promotion and/or the salary. Others may leave their area of comfort because of peer pressure or for personal reasons all of which cause the individual to compromise his inner states. Another individual who was satisfied with an executive type of position may experience stress if he is transferred or is asked to leave that position for one which involves a good deal of analyzing or performing of more routine tasks.

Individuals who accept or acquire the code of others, place themselves in a position where the motivation to perform must be found in external sources such as financial or material gain, and/or from peer or relative approval. In effect, within that acquired framework the individual looks at his job or profession in terms of how much he earns, how people think about him, the amount of luxuries he can afford, etc. This person is not living according to a genetic code that is self motivating but by an acquired code that requires external sources to reinforce the efforts.

Some people, rather than constantly bemoaning or displacing their unhappiness, look to areas of compensation they can draw upon as a source of relief and enjoyment in order to cope with those aspects of life that are less satisfying. Thus, at day's or week's end these individuals may involve themselves in an activity that is more in touch with their genetic code such as cooking, mechanics, art, music, etc. which in the end allows them to better tolerate or cope with the less tolerable work demands.

When the degree or level of satisfaction derived from living within the acquired code is minimal, feelings of dissatisfaction intensify. These negative feelings in turn evolve into feelings of frustration, alienation, unrest, and jealousy which become displaced or projected onto others. As such, internalized stress can become vented onto family members or people who are considered less threatening, or in activities that usually involve some degree of risk such as auto racing, or mountain climbing. Other forms of escape may include chemicals such as drugs or alcohol and if all else fails the chronic internalized despair may eventually give rise to the various stress related illnesses such as ulcer, migraine, or cardiovascular disorder.

Thus, without any type of abatement, the employee who is primarily functioning from the acquired code gradually develops feelings of entrapment which in turn leads to an intensification of the stress resulting in a breakdown of the defenses. The breakdown can come in the form of alcoholism, drugs or illness, or it may cause the worker to take unnecessary on the job risks or perform with less care and as a result become the victim of an accident. The accident would inevitably remove the person from the offensive work site.
In addition to being removed from an irritating job site, other secondary gains can be derived from an accident or injury. An individual married to someone for acquired reasons, e.g., attractiveness, financial status or for situational or circumstantial reasons, e.g., pregnancy, infatuation, convenience, may now view his injury as a way of avoiding the relationship or as a means for forcing others to adhere to his needs or demands. Indeed, even children can now be called upon to serve the parent rather than the other way around. Another secondary gain can come in the form of a desperate attempt to hold onto a relationship that is destined for dissolution. Thus, the disability can be used as a means for trying to force the spouse or other family member to remain at home and care for the “ailing” individual rather than end the relationship.

For the person living within his acquired code, an injury can create a network of conditions that can afford more reward than the former life style ever permitted. That being the case, why would a man such as Bill ever want to improve in his therapy?

People living primarily within their own genetic code can succumb to injury and as a result also be removed from the mainstream of life. The difference, however, lies within the balance of the codes. The individual who resides more within the acquired code will be less likely to get enthused about therapies that offer a return to the premorbid life style, while the individual who resides more within his genetic code such as Frank, will be more likely to get enthused about opportunities that offer rehabilitation.

Does that mean that people who have lived their lives with only acquired outcomes can never become rehabilitated? Are all of these rehab programs a waste of time and money for such individuals? I believe that if a rehabilitation specialist or program does not address the genetic code and the internal needs of each individual then the answers to these questions would be pessimistic. On the other hand, therapy that incorporates the genetic code maximizes its chances for successful outcomes.

As indicated, the codes, genetic and acquired, are multifaceted and hierarchical in nature. They are not created to do one job or vocation nor are they built to do a particular job in only one manner. Further, the composites are usually not all genetic nor not all acquired in construction but are typically a balance or a blend of both. Thus, in assessing the nature of the code, the examiner would assess the hierarchical levels of satisfaction within the sensory and processing modalities, modes of organization (inductive vs. deductive), hemisphere dominance, general approaches to life, e.g., inner vs. outer directed) in addition to voices interests and inclinations in order to determine to what degree these among other features are being satisfied in the person’s life.

During the course of the interview the examiner would review the worker’s life history comparing childhood inclinations and drives to the manner in which the individual performs in his life today. Clues for learning about the genetic code may be gleaned from questions regarding aspects of the individual’s life in terms of what excites him, what he is indifferent to and what he dislikes or avoids, again comparing and contrasting these responses to those of early childhood. The examiner would further look at the manner in which the worker scans his environment. Is he more visual, auditory, kinesthetic or olfactory? The examiner would also consider hemispheric preferences. After completing the analysis of the codes the examiner would then assess the manner in which the genetic code coincides with the job requirements or demands.

An auditory, sequential, analytic processor who by definition prefers to approach circumstances by trying to understand what is heard and then organizing the data temporally, would not do as well if he worked under conditions where instructions were not explained verbally (thus not offering opportunity to analyze the words) but were primarily given using visual demonstration from a wholistic position. Similarly, an individual who requires an opportunity to grasp the essence of a task or problem from the non verbal perspective (to get a sense of things), e.g., drilling a tooth, performing surgery, repairing an alternator, may feel overwhelmed by excessive verbiage.

If a person is functioning within an area of interest, he is more apt to make allowances or develop compensatory procedures which can allow for a better fit between his code and that of the instructors. To illustrate, the auditory person who receives a good deal of visual instruction may take a tape recorder to class; the visual person taught by a lecturer may take copious notes or rely upon internal visualization as an assist. The inductive processor taught by a deductive processor may attempt to break down instructions into stages while the right hemisphere person may create internal images to accompany the lectures. The individual, on the other hand, who is functioning within an area of disinterest and who is, therefore, functioning within an acquired code will be less tolerant of differences, be less apt to learn, be less able to accommodate changes in the environment, and will also be less able to develop compensatory procedures.

A working knowledge of how these two codes, genetic vs. acquired, interact and how they balance with each other is essential before the therapist proceeds with the development of a treatment program. The patient, as an individual, needs to be assessed from several perspectives. Is he functioning from a position of intrinsic interests and stability or does he come from a background of established facades that mask underlying feelings of resentment and insecurity? How strong are the external rewards in this individual’s life? Does he derive a fair degree of satisfaction from his premorbid livelihood, his status on the job, his role in the family or do the secondary gains discussed earlier outweigh these external aspects of the premorbid life style?

Unless the therapist can understand the workings of the codes and tap into the genetic code, the chances for rehabilitation are minimized. On the other hand, the therapist who works with the genetic code can help the patient to increase satisfaction and more effective coping mechanisms. Accordingly, the therapist may try to help the patient to compensate for losses by helping the worker to readjust his sensory hierarchy and modes of organization so that they can work better for him. In effect, the person who may have been a visual scanner may
now need to rely more upon auditory and/or kinesthetic data to improve perception while the sequential analyzer may now need to work from more of a gestalt perspective in order to improve upon his comprehension. If for logistic reasons it is not possible for the worker to return to his previous job, an understanding of the genetic code can help the therapist to place or transfer the worker to a department that is more in kind with the genetic code. The therapist would consider the worker’s modes of orientation and job interest and try to provide him with demands that would permit him to perform with a greater degree of proficiency and in so doing increase his level of motivation. For the patient unable to return to his former job, due to physical and/or cognitive difficulties, the search for an alternative vocation will also need to include an investigation of the genetic code. Traditionally, vocational assessments include aptitude testing and a paper pencil interest test which are then used to help direct the patient towards making a new job choice. Without an understanding of the genetic code, the capacity to help the patient with his singular interests will be highly limited even with objective scores. Working with the genetic code increases the chances for tapping those features of the personality that allow the worker to make choices that fit with his internal needs and interests motivating him to complete the program while experiencing a comparatively high degree of satisfaction and consequently the capacity to attain gainful employment.

As indicated earlier, people like Frank will usually try their hardest to get back to their former life style. Their orientation may need some alteration due to pain, cortical or nerve damage, etc. but once in the program the internal motivation will help them to incorporate what is needed in order to get back to the job. People like Bill, on the other hand, will need more intensive renovation work. Careful assessment will be required to determine the patient’s areas of interest, as well as his strengths and weaknesses to help him become realigned with himself. Once the individual is introduced to his genetic code and is actively working with the code, there is a greater probability that the patient will want to learn whatever will be necessary to further enhance his code and as such to develop a life style that is more intrinsically rewarding. He will not need to rely upon secondary gains or take unnecessary risks. He will not need to escape into alcoholism nor will there be an excessive buildup of tensions to cause him to vent or displace onto others. Rather, he will learn new ways of enhancing and enjoying his code. He needs to be encouraged to participate in exercise, explore hobbies, try to be more interactive with the family and peers, take better care of his physical condition through improved diet and sleep, and generally spend his time more meaningfully.

Needless to say, helping a person to reestablish a healthy balance in life or to switch from familiar gears is not an easy process, but once again the changes will motivate the person to become more active in his rehabilitation and more productive in his overall lifestyle.

References


