

# Part One

# INTRODUCTION



Congratulations and thank you for acquiring *WHY DID I DO IT AGAIN*. Paths To Wellness - Book Two, Part One. This guided self-help workbook was developed to help people who have problems with sexuality and aggression. I recommend that you read and complete the first workbook *Who Am I and Why Am I in Treatment?* before beginning this one. Each workbook builds on the information of the previous one. If you don't read the workbooks or chapters in order, you may feel confused, lost in the material, and discouraged.

In *Who Am I?* you read a brief overview about behavioral cycles and completed assignments that helped you identify some of your own cycles. This workbook covers similar cycles of behavior, but is more detailed and helps you learn more about yourself. After you have studied your cycles, you will discover they are the basis for almost everything you think, feel, and do. You can use this information in treatment to help you change your life for the better.

Understanding and exploring your cycles will take a lot of time and effort. To do it well you have to be willing to look closely at yourself and get feedback from others. You must ask for feedback from your therapists, friends, and group members about what they see in your attitudes, thinking, feeling, and behavior. Hardest of all, you must really listen when they give you feedback. Asking for help and hearing what others say about you, helps you learn to separate normal from destructive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. By learning the differences you can learn how to detect your destructive cycles and how to stop them in your day-to-day life.

Each chapter in this workbook ends with homework assignments designed to help you better understand the material and practice what you have learned. If you do not understand an assignment, ask your therapist, group, or a close friend. Even if you do not understand a question completely, think about it, ask your group or a friend, and try your best to give good answers. We recommend that you not write in this workbook. Keep a separate notebook for writing each of your assignments. You should review your homework assignments with your therapist or group. As in *Who Am I?* we strongly recommend that you join a treatment program for sex offenders. However, in many places specialized treatment is not available. If you must work on your own, we recommend you share your assignments with a friend or someone else you can trust to give you accurate, honest feedback.

Again, I congratulate you on your efforts to help yourself through treatment. I sincerely wish you good fortune in your treatment program and in completing this workbook. If you are working on your own, I hope that this workbook will be a useful tool for you and that you will continue to work at making changes in your life. GOOD LUCK!

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*NOTE: The authors recognize that sex offenders can be male or female. However, since the majority of individuals we treat are men, and in an effort to make the reading of this workbook easier, we have elected to refer to sex offenders as males.*

pattern of behavior that makes you less effective, less healthy, or prone to inappropriate or criminal behavior. At times your deviant cycle may become more intense and obvious, as when you begin to plan a sexual crime. At other times the deviant cycle is operating within you and you may not be aware of it. As you work through this book you will learn to recognize both kinds of cycles.

## **There are at least nine good reasons for you to study your cycles, especially your deviant cycle.**

### **1 You learn what led up to committing your crime.**

To stop your deviant behavior you must answer the question, "How did I get into the state of mind to commit my crime?" or "How could I have done it?" Many offenders think, "I'm not that kind of person, so why did I do it?" Understanding your deviant cycle will explain, in part, how you can go from acting wisely, feeling good, being productive and social, to acting criminally. The path from normal behavior to criminal behavior is not hard to see when you become aware of the decisions you made and the actions you took.

The path from health to deviance is not simple. Many small decisions, seemingly unrelated to the result, led up to the big decision of committing a deviant act or sex offense. When you study the cycle you will discover the long route you took to acting out your deviant or criminal behavior. When you understand the decisions that led to your deviant activity in the past, you will understand how you got into a deviant state of mind.

### **2 By studying your cycle you learn that each of your actions has several causes and several effects.**

Everything you do has a cause; something that happened before and directly influenced what came after. When you decide to masturbate, something happens before you make that deci-

sion. Perhaps you feel lonely, or see an attractive woman, or have a sexual fantasy, or just feel sexual. Something happened to set the stage for what comes next. At first it may be difficult to understand what caused you to behave in a certain way. As you learn about the deviant cycle you will discover that each thought, feeling, situation, behavior, or perception causes some effect or change in you or in your environment.

An effect does not have to be big; it may be small and subtle. For example, waking up and becoming aware of how your mouth feels may have the effect of making you want to brush your teeth. Perceiving how your mouth feels is then one of the causes that leads to brushing your teeth. When you understand your cycle you will learn about the causes (the behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and circumstances) that lead to your deviant behaviors.

### **3 You learn how you usually react to thoughts, feelings, and environments.**

When you understand your deviant cycle you can predict where particular types of thinking, feeling, and acting may lead. The ability to see the effects of your reactions in your behavior will help you control your deviancy and is a necessity for healthy living. For example, after you have learned about the cycle you will be able to predict both the long-term and short-term effects of drinking alcohol. You will be able to say how you will feel if you drink, how you might act, and how others respond to

you. Knowing about the effects of your behavior gives you an important tool for controlling your life.

#### **4 You learn that your behavior is affected by every place you go and everything you see.**

Different environments - friends, work, even movies - influence whether you think, feel, and act in healthy or in deviant ways. Some environments, like a topless bar, may influence you to act sexually. Other environments, like prison, may influence you to watch every move you make. As you get better at predicting how a particular environment may affect your feelings, thoughts, and actions, you will be able to find environments that encourage you to lead a healthy life and avoid environments that lead to deviancy.

Learning about the cycle will help you to understand the complexity of the relationship between your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and your environment. You may feel angry and be in an environment (like a classroom) that encourages you to stay in control; or you may feel angry and be in an environment (like a bar) that encourages you to "let it all out." As you better understand your cycle you will be able to identify environments where you will be at greater risk to reoffend. You will also learn about environments that may start your feelings and thoughts heading in a direction that can lead you to deviant behavior.

#### **5 By studying your cycle you learn how your feelings influence your behavior.**

Learning about your cycle will help you to discover how your feelings contribute to your behavior. Consider, for example, the feeling of "righteous anger": you feel that you have been wronged and have the right to be angry. Offenders often feel righteous anger; they use it as an excuse to violate a law or get even, and

they end up in more trouble than when they started. Learning to recognize unhealthy feelings and where they may lead is part of learning about the cycle.

#### **6 You learn how your thoughts influence your behavior.**

Your thoughts about yourself and the world contribute to your health or deviance. Errors in how you think about the world and yourself usually occur long before any problem behavior happens. If you never thought about deviant sexual behavior then you would not act deviantly. Even in what appears to be an impulsive, spontaneous crime, thoughts set the stage for the behavior. Learning what kind of thinking leads to deviant behavior and what kind leads to healthy behavior is an essential step in understanding your cycle.

#### **7 You learn how your beliefs about the world and yourself influence how you act.**

Most adults have old beliefs or fixed ideas that they grew up with. Some are accurate and healthy, and some are destructive. An example of an unhealthy fixed belief might be "all women are untrustworthy," simply because they are women. You might have learned it in your childhood if you were sexually abused by a woman or if the men in your family taught you to believe it. This distortion of reality ("all women can't be trusted") influences you to act suspicious or hostile toward women; your hostile behavior then influences others to avoid you or be angry with you. Unhealthy fixed beliefs lead you into trouble. Understanding what your fixed beliefs are and how they have contributed to your deviant cycle enables you to change in a healthy way. For example, once you realize that one of your beliefs is "all women can't be trusted," you can change that belief. You can learn that some women (like some men) can't be trusted. You can also learn

how to decide which ones you can trust and which ones you cannot.

## **8** Understanding your cycle teaches you how what you do today influences what you do tomorrow and in the future.

Understanding your cycle teaches you where you are going. If you have a habit of being angry today, you will probably be angry tomorrow unless you make a conscious effort to change. If you have a habit of resentment this year, you will likely be resentful next year also. If you have a habit of laziness today, you will be lazy tomorrow. When you look deeply into your cycles you see that how you acted in the past influenced your later behavior. In an unconscious and unhealthy way you have been in control of your life for most of your life. What you decided to do one day led you to the next day's decisions. You can change this so that you have a healthy power over your future. It all depends on what you do today, each day.

### **Links in a Chain**

A link is a small distinct part of a chain that connects one part with another. Links are the single thoughts, feelings, or actions that make up your cycle. If the links were not present to connect one behavior with another, you would not continue with an action. Think about your morning routine. You might get up, think about having a cup of coffee, and go make coffee. The link between getting up and drinking coffee is the thought of coffee. If you come

home from work and feel lonely, you might call your lady friend. The feeling of loneliness is the link between coming home and calling your lady friend.

Each of these links is connected to another link. You feel bored, think about going driving, get into your car, feel pleasure, think about going to the movies, and drive away in that direction. Each thought, feeling, and behavior in this sequence links what came before with what comes after.

They are connected like the links in a chain. One link is connected to the next link, is connected to the next link, is connected to.... When you break any link in the chain, the chain is broken. You break your deviant cycle by breaking one link at a time.

When you look closely at any sequence of behavior you notice that there are many small links. These links are essential to the behavior; the chain of behavior would not continue without them. The

## **9** Understanding your cycle will teach you when and how to stop your deviant behavior.

Understanding your cycle is a step toward developing tools to break an out-of-control cycle. When you have learned what environments, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors lead to unhealthy or dangerous situations, you can intervene to stop them. Even when there hasn't been any direct problem with a feeling or thought, you may need to intervene so it does not lead to deviant behavior. Learning about your deviant cycle teaches you where you are heading and when you must intervene. For example, loneliness by itself is not unhealthy, but in your deviant cycle it is an early warning sign that you need to intervene and make decisions about how to handle that feeling. You may decide to go to an AA meeting or call up a friend instead of running your old pattern of trying to drink your loneliness away. Knowing when to intervene is one result of understanding your deviant cycle.

link may seem very unimportant, but the entire chain of behaviors would stop if that link were not there. If you did not think, "I'd better get the paper," you would not read the paper. Thinking is an essential link. Part of your morning routine would stop if you broke that link. If you did not feel you needed to brush your teeth, you would be less likely to brush them. If you broke several links in your morning routine, the entire morning routine would come to a stop.

### **The First Link: Perception**

A perception is what you see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. In order to recognize something you must become aware of it, you must perceive it. Perceptions are the result of information your senses receive and your brain processes. If you smell something burning, that is a perception. Seeing a car coming at you is a perception. Your awareness of your environment is the result of perceptions. Perceptions by themselves are not good or bad. How you respond to a perception is what is important.

A trigger is something that starts a bullet moving. In the same sense a perception may trigger healthy or unhealthy thoughts or feelings. For example, seeing a picture of a naked child is a perception.

When you respond to the picture sexually, that feeling is an unhealthy response to the perception. Because you have responded sexually to the photo, that photo is a trigger for your deviant sexual feelings. Seeing a woman hitchhiking is a perception. If you are a rapist, seeing the woman may be a trigger for thoughts of picking her up and raping her. Perceptions often trigger or start a series of thoughts or feelings.

### **The Second Link: Thought**

Thought refers to all mental activity: ideas, notions, opinions, beliefs, impressions, judgments, etc. Generally, you think about what you are doing, different situations you encounter, past events, future happenings, or other ideas. The human thought process provides you with the capacity to reason, use logic, use common sense, put together ideas, and a variety of other processes.

Your mind is seldom empty of thoughts. Even when you are sleeping your mind is active. You have dreams even when you do not remember dreaming. In your daily life your mind is active in an ongoing mental dialogue so habitual, so usual, that you hardly notice it. To see how active your mind is, try sitting in a quiet place and counting your breaths. See if you can focus

on the counting without thinking of anything else. You'll be amazed at how much is going on in your mind without your ever being aware of it.

Thoughts govern just about everything you do. You do not have to be aware of the thoughts for them to influence you. Whether you are aware of them or not, even the simplest, most natural, ordinary action requires thought. The thoughts, "I think I'll make some coffee," or "I think I'll take a shower" come before doing these things. If you never thought about coffee you would never make coffee. Thought is necessary for action. You may not be aware of simple thoughts occurring throughout the day before you do something because routine thoughts are often abbreviated, shortened into personal mental shorthand. "I think I'll make some coffee," might be shortened to "coffee." "I hate him for what he did," might be shortened to "hate."

Thoughts are always present. Usually a perception precedes a thought, which is followed by action. For example, you look through a magazine and see a picture of a woman. First you see the picture of the woman and then you begin thinking about how sexy she looks. Thinking about sex encourages you to decide to masturbate and you reach for

your fly. Your perception led to your thoughts, which led to your decision to masturbate and to your action of reaching for your fly. Thoughts make links that connect perceptions and actions.

When you allow your thoughts to dwell on the idea of doing something, those thoughts prepare you to do it. Sex offenders have thoughts and fantasies about committing their crimes before they actually do them. As a sex offender, your thoughts about deviant sex link your perceptions and your behavior.

Deviant thoughts are often based on prejudices, old habitual ways of thinking. These prejudices may be subconscious, the result of the distorted ways you learned to feel safe and powerful as a child. Often people are prejudiced without even knowing it. They have a habit of seeing a person of another race, a different background or sexual orientation, the other gender, or someone with a handicap and thinking, "I don't like that..." Because of these old thoughts, their minds are not clear enough to be open to new experiences. Learning to be aware of these deeply rooted and half-hidden thoughts is one step toward breaking the cycle of deviant thinking.

## **The Third Link: Feeling**

A feeling is an emotion or an internal sensation. You have many feelings. Feelings often happen after perceptions or thoughts. Feelings are your internal reactions to things that are going on around you and within you. When you see a person (a perception) who has been hit by a car, you may feel panic. Later as you remember the incident (a thought), you may feel sad. There is always a connection between what you think and what you feel; either one may happen first, but the other closely follows it. When you feel sad, you may think your life is horrible. On the other hand, when you think your life is horrible you may feel sad. Your feelings affect your thoughts; your thoughts affect your feelings. Being aware of what you are feeling is an important step in changing your life. Once you know you feel depressed much of the time, you can make decisions that will take you out of depression. When you do not know how you feel, you cannot make healthy decisions.

It is important to understand the emotions that are a part of your cycle. You may feel any or all of the following emotions as part of your deviant cycle: sadness, joy, fear, anger, fatigue, depression, happiness, love, hate, confusion, emptiness, frustration, con-

tentedness, pain, hurt, and loneliness. These feelings often make the connection between your thoughts and your behavior.

As a sex offender you probably block your feelings. You deny that you feel emotions like sorrow, fear, or pain. It becomes a habit for you to cut off feelings that might help you understand how others feel; this habit makes it easier for you to commit a crime. When your capacity for feeling compassion is lessened, you become less human and you respond to others as if they are less than human. When you cut off old, painful emotions like fear, terror, helplessness, and confusion, you cut off all emotions; you may not feel fear, but you probably don't feel joy either. As you write out your deviant cycle, try to notice when certain feelings start and stop.

## **The Fourth Link: Behavior**

Behavior means action, what you do. How you behave is the result of how you think and feel. If you feel like masturbating and you think it is okay, then you will probably masturbate. On the other hand, people who never have positive thoughts or feelings about deviant sexual acts do not commit sexual crimes.

Initially, most of your behavior is a result of your con-