

Published: Monday 18 July 2016

## Altering beliefs in people

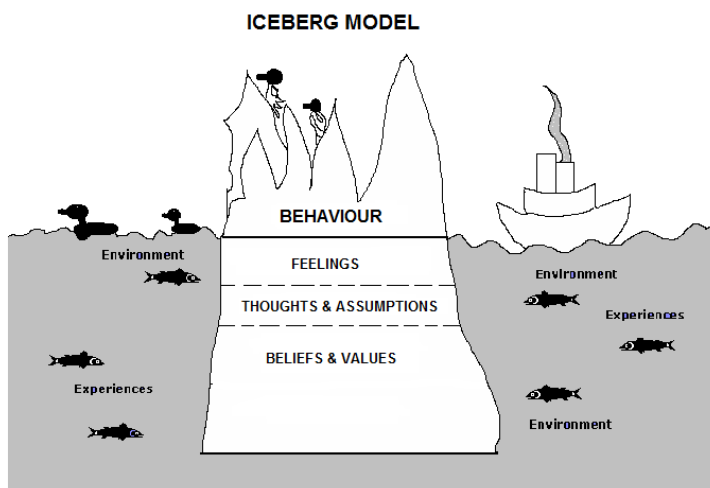
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At a recent seminar on 'value based existence', where I was a panelist, a young manager asked me if it was possible to change behaviour of people in organisations.



While the question seemed simple and could have prompted an immediate response, it encouraged me to go within and seek and answer from a genuine state of curiosity and concern for the young manager who sought the answer. I experienced in his question a need to understand human behaviour in an organisational context and respond to actions that people demonstrate with compassion.

I therefore searched within myself for an answer to his question.

### Mind over mood

David Rock, who has done extensive work on the mind and neural pathways of human beings, believes that behaviour modification when addressed in isolation is a cosmetic exercise. It is his belief that a model presents itself for scrutiny when addressing behaviour change.

What we see visibly demonstrated by an individual, be it an employee in an organisation or a person in society, is the behaviour that is manifest.

Most initiatives that we undertake are to tinker with this behaviour through interventions that help the individual recognise functional and dysfunctional aspects of behaviour.

Below the surface, not visible to viewing, are the 'feelings' that are being generated within the individual which cause the person to show up such behaviour. The feelings that play out in behaviour are affected by the 'thoughts and assumptions' that generate within individuals. Many cognitive behavioural practitioners call this 'mind over mood.'

Below the assumptions and thoughts are deeply entrenched 'beliefs and values' that a human being carries from, perhaps, childhood.

### **Challenge beliefs, not contest**

Thus if one wants to help an individual alter or change behaviour that will help the person function effectively in a world populated by others, it is important for us to challenge, not contest the beliefs that one carries within. When beliefs are challenged in a way that the individual is able to question self, shifts happen in attitude and approach and this ultimately results in a change of thinking, feeling and thus behaviour.

Many existential philosophers believe that beliefs and the values that arise in an individual are the very reason for the existence of a person in a functional world.

When a belief and value of an individual is endorsed by people and society the individual feels valued, cherished, approved and perhaps joyful. Yet when these beliefs and values are threatened the individual becomes resentful and angry. Again if a person believes that he is losing hold or control of his beliefs and values, he begins to despair. Finally when an individual aspires to cultivate a particular belief or value he experiences within a sense of sometimes envy, sometimes aspiration and sometimes deep desire.

It therefore behoves those who want to help people demonstrate functional behaviour in the real world to recognise the belief and value structure that constitute the human being they are dealing with and work from there upwards towards maturation of thought process, evocation of feelings and finally demonstrated behaviour.

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