

## ‘Thin slicing’, a recommendation

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I was invited by a medium-scale business to work with them during this phase of lockdown.

Given the uncertainty prevailing, the head of HR wished that I help them re-examine their vision, values and mission and through this arrive at a shared purpose.

With direct contact not being possible the suggestion was to attempt the exercise through a ZOOM session.



The task seemed large and required longitudinal effort.

My plea was to chunk down the 'need' and attempt, at this point, to 'thin slice' what was desired.

Thin slicing, as I understand the idea, is to look at any issue that warrants scrutiny closely and with focus. The imagery that ‘thin slicing’ conjures in my mind is 'like the eating of a loaf of bread'.

When consumed whole it is bound to upset, yet when eaten 'slice by slice', slowly and mindfully surely digestion is easier.

The Covid-19 has not only brought threat at a global level but is also causing ambiguity to individuals and organisations. People are psychologically challenged and emotionally distressed.

In this context each of us need to support one another in restoring our sense of wellbeing, positivity and health.

What is happening is happening and now it is time that we need to see and also ask ourselves, 'how can we go ahead and rebuild?'

The idea is to go 'inwards', examine the positives in us and allow them to manifest.

As individuals and organisations we may not have much control over what is happening around us, yet we do have the ability to fashion our response to what is happening.

With this understanding and backdrop I recommended a simple, therapeutic, healing and visioning process to help that organisation.

The technique, which is being suggested, is called 'Possibility-Probability Reinforcement Technique' (PPRT).

PPRT is conceptualized as a hybrid technique that draws from existential-humanistic philosophy, cognitive behaviour therapy, rational emotional behaviour therapy, gestalt therapy and positive psychology.

It might be construed as inappropriate to use the word technique, where the endeavour is to help persons and the organisation equip themselves through:

1. exploring the context and situation
2. searching for understanding thorough what is obvious and revealed rather than through interpretation
3. work with what is emerging

Yet, in the attempt to help individuals and the organisation to learn to fish rather than offering fish, techniques help facilitate awareness; capture the wisdom that the individuals and the organisation have in themselves and thereby surface what needs to be done. Thus technique becomes an anchor to pursue the desired outcome.

Embedded in this technique is the belief that individuals and the organisation are fundamentally oriented towards health. It is through increasing awareness of who we are, what we think, how we act that we realise the potential of discovering answers that actually lie within us, perhaps buried deep within.

The idea therefore is to **CREATE** i.e. to help persons and the organisation recognise

**C**urrent **R**eality, **E**xplore **A**lternatives, and **T**ap into their **E**nergies.

The existential-humanistic approach was made popular by James Bugental, Irvin Yalom and Kirk Schneider. Its aim is to attempt to help persons and organisations overcome problematic defences and meet the anxieties of living an existence with an attitude of decisiveness and resolve. The approach often times takes a questioning stance. It assumes that persons and organisations have challenges in living a fulfilling life rather than having mental illnesses. The approach requires us as people not to deny our

realities for in doing so we may tend to deny the capacity to make the most of our lives. If we do not face up to the realities of our existence, we are less likely to be able to deal with challenges which will inevitably arise as we live in this world and therefore impair or affect our ability to find creative solutions.

Cognitive behaviour therapy and rational emotional behaviour therapy believe that if we are able to accept ourselves unconditionally i.e. without placing undue expectations on ourselves on how a situation should necessarily pan out, only then would we be in a position to make a dispassionate assessment of our strengths and our growth edges and assume responsibility for our emotions and behaviour rather than letting them be the product of pressure from outside.

We can only work on what we understand. If we do not know what makes us respond to an event in a particular way we would not be in a position to correct or alter maladaptive thinking.

The Socratic approach, which is adopted in the PPR technique helps investigate ‘what we tell ourselves when we confront a situation?’ ‘How do we tend to react / respond?’ ‘What would need to happen for the situation to better?’ Such questions when posed through a process of guided discovery may help to productively amend the constructs that one has about what the person and the organisation can and may do.

Positive Psychology operates on looking at strengths that are present in us and the organisation and harnessing them for better productivity and performance.

The two words ‘possibility’ and ‘probability’ draw their inspiration from spirituality which emphasises the need to create ‘possibility pathways’ in our thinking thereby allowing for the probability of success.

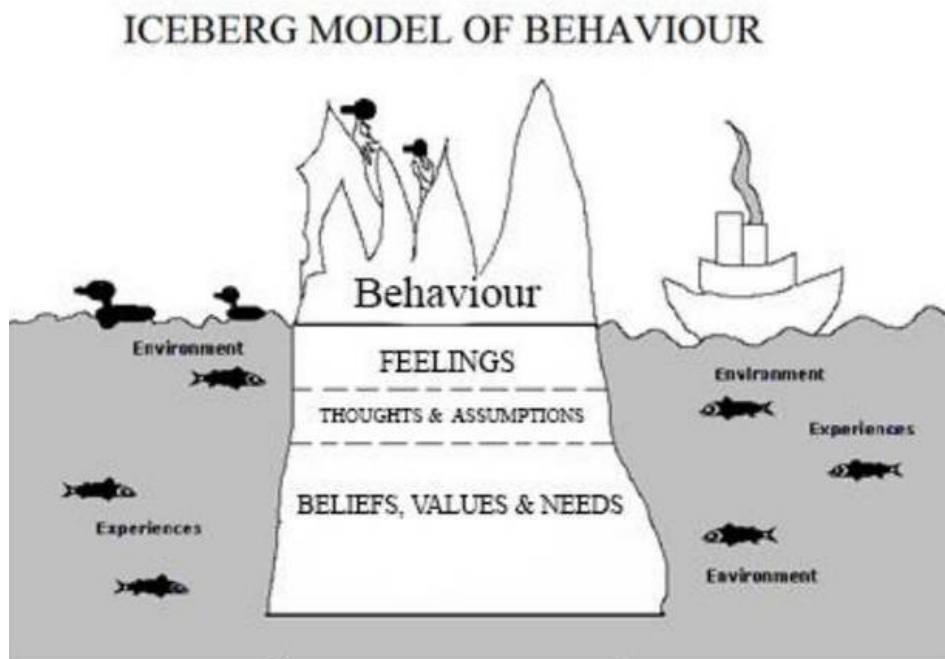
Possibility suggests the likelihood of an event happening and probability reinforces that possibility if ‘attempted.’ The word ‘technique’ is to highlight a skill that can be learnt, which again is what positive psychology says when it talks of ‘learnt optimism’ or ‘learnt helplessness’; both of which a human being learns in the course of one’s existence in an individual’s physical life time.

Inherently every human being is born with an embedded capacity to overcome challenges, to revive, to restore, to achieve and finally to triumph. Yet owing to several factors that impact a human being as one evolves in life, several of ‘life’s gifts’ either diminish or disappear. Thus it is important to rekindle ‘hope’, ‘faith’ and ‘patience’ in one.

The process that was being recommended through the technique of PPRT as prescribed operates on a few basic assumptions; among them are:

1. That life as lived or can be lived makes sense and we as humans can create meaning for our living by our attitude.
2. Essentially we as people have a flexible nature, yet owing to circumstances we tend to become sedimented, conditioned and fixated. However each of us has the ability to determine how we can respond through ‘creative adjustment.’
3. Each of us can be ‘self-directive’ if we are able to assess and comprehend the direction in which we are going.
4. It is possible through consideration of our realities, limitations and consequences to clarify, reflect upon and understand our life.

The model of unfoldment is as follows:



In summary therefore my submission for ‘thin slicing’ is:

It's good to have a mind,  
 A thinking mind even better;  
 Yet when this mind games play,  
 My life spins out of kilter.  
 This happens when doubts abound,  
 And sets me off my limits;

Then suddenly my thinking warps,  
And to negative thoughts I submit.  
Thus the answer is to not dwell much,  
On what may not happen;  
To turn away from what depletes  
And positivity in me sharpen.  
All we need is faith in self and patience to cultivate,  
With effort then our endeavours will bear fruit,  
All negative thoughts in us dissipate.

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