

PART FOUR

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Next Steps and Broader Implications

IN THESE concluding remarks we revisit and refine the goals we set forth in the introduction, and consider some of the broader societal implications of our control-based approach.

CONTROL THERAPY

The book develops and details a unifying theory of control (Part I), a control-based vision of mental, physical, and interpersonal health (Part II), and specific assertive/change and yielding/acceptance mode of control intervention techniques (Part III). We have seen how a sophisticated understanding of control can provide new insights into the therapeutic process, regardless of therapist orientation, can be applied across many clinical areas, and can offer new techniques and strategies.

The goal of this book is also more ambitious. Through the development of a unifying theory of control, it shows how control can be recognized as a central component underlying all schools of therapy. In addition to the theory's universality and parsimony, it also can be operationalized and thereby provide a foundation for assessing a client's control profile. Based on the individual variations in control profiles, specific techniques can be matched to client needs, including a balanced and integrated use of assertive and yielding modes of control, the ability to gain a sense of control from both self and other, and a deeper, more conscious awareness of when and how desire for control is expressed (and should be increased, decreased, or channeled). Finally, by detailing specific instructions in control-based techniques with a step-by-step model for short-term treatment packages of 8 to 12 sessions, we create the basis for a control therapy.

As is detailed throughout the book, control therapy grows out of and is tied to the voluminous clinical, health, and social psychological research literature. Further, we acknowledge where control therapy borrows from other approaches, such as the importance of supportive relationship in client-centered therapy, examining resistance and defenses from psychody-

dynamic therapy, the use of techniques and advocating rigorous evaluation from the cognitive and behavioral approaches, the importance of values and vision from the humanistic/existential, and transpersonal perspectives.

However, control therapy goes beyond other approaches in that it is built on an integrated unifying theory, a means of assessment, and specific replicable techniques that can be tested and evaluated. Using a systems model, we show the importance of therapists understanding their own control dynamics in the therapeutic process; recognizing and clarifying control assumptions, beliefs, and assaults to the client's sense of control; matching individually tailored strategies to a client's control profiles and control problems; and matching the therapist's method of teaching to the client's control style.

During the past 20 years we have built a substantial database regarding the use of a control-based therapy. Information about different aspects of our theoretical and clinical model has been used by several thousand clinicians and scientists in more than 25 countries around the world, and research with the Shapiro Control Inventory is ongoing worldwide.

Even with these theoretical and clinical refinements, however, more research and refinement are needed as we continue to develop the science of a control-based therapeutic model. On the one hand, much still remains intuitive, artistic, and as yet unquantifiable on the role of control in the therapeutic encounter. Therefore, it is critical that the clinicians in the front line of practice continue to communicate with the theorists and researchers. On the other hand, more research is needed to further test and compare control therapy with other approaches. By detailing the theory, research, and practice of control therapy in this book, we provide a foundation and framework for such further research. We hope this framework also serves as an impetus for creating an increasingly sophisticated dialogue among clinicians, theorists, and researchers.

BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL: SOCIETAL ISSUES OF CONTROL

Although this book focuses on a control-based approach, the theory and techniques can and should be applied to the larger societal context, including educational and preventive programs (e.g., Humphreys, 1996). For example, it is important to teach children (and parents) about their control-related profiles—desire for control, healthy and unhealthy ways of gaining control, assertive and yielding modes—as part of parenting classes and health education classes in primary and secondary schools, and pre-medical and medical education (cf. Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner 1998).

Our control-based theory is also applicable to social ills. Many of today's global problems—violence, racial prejudice, environmental destruction, and

larger geopolitical issues of domination over resources and ideology—can be understood as desire for control gone awry, a misplaced effort to gain control in order to master or reduce feelings of powerlessness.

UNPRECEDENTED CHAOS, UNPRECEDENTED CONTROL

Paradoxically, it is at this time of unprecedented technological control that much of modern life seems increasingly out of control. The pace of life today is faster and changing more quickly than at any other point in recorded time.

On a personal level, as discussed earlier, the revolution in brain sciences and biotechnology and the new advances in gene mapping are raising questions about how much free will and control we actually can exert over our thoughts, behavior, and emotions. We are increasingly recognizing that our rational mind may not always be as rational as believed; that our body seems to have a mind of its own; and that our normal mental control strategies may be reflexive, unconscious, and often self-destructive.

On an interpersonal level, the traditional roles of men and women are in transition, and there are no clear guidelines as to how the genders should interact. Family structures seem to be breaking down and even the definition of what constitutes a family is shifting. On an economic and socioenvironmental level we are witnessing cataclysmic shifts in national boundaries and identities. Through the media we are able to witness firsthand and with immediacy mind-numbing examples of natural and human-caused suffering across the planet.

Finally, even our philosophical and religious truths are being challenged in dramatic ways. Despite their own personal beliefs, a majority of U.S. citizens see the influence of religion on the decline. We now live in what some refer to as the postmodern age (Derrida, 1982; Sampson, 1981, 1985), a time in which new philosophical orientations call into question the very nature and existence of reality and the self. In this view, truth is a relative concept, values are situational, and the universe is a vast, indifferent, and impersonal entity.

Yet, even as the order and coherence provided by traditional religion are lost, there is less certainty than before that divine order will inevitably be replaced by the domination of the rational human mind. The faith in humanity's enlightenment and rational ability to gain control of the world is similarly in doubt. It is now recognized that achieving greater control through scientific means and technological progress exacts a serious cost and is not an unequivocal panacea.

Natural responses to this unprecedented chaos are to feel helpless and powerless in response to the enormity of all this uncertainty and change; and to rigidly cling to or seek to return to tradition as a way of regaining a

sense of control. In many ways, these represent the two negative control quadrants (negative passivity and overcontrol). A third, more optimal, response would be to see this loss of control and chaos as a time for creative change and growth, not just for individuals, but for institutions and communities as well. The time is right to begin to create a new control story, a new paradigm. Such an approach requires the ability to accept newness, change, impermanence (the positive yielding mode), and the strength and courage to create new ways of seeing and being in the world (positive assertive control).

A central task both individually and collectively, for psychological theory, research, and practice is to help teach where and when control goals, desires, and strategies are reflexive, limiting, and potentially destructive; and to channel the quest for control into more life-affirming and health-promoting paths. The quality of our lives, and ultimately the well-being of the planet, may in large part be determined by where and how we, as individuals, seek to gain and maintain a sense of control.