

Shadowmatch®

A Simplified Model for Understanding Behavior

Habits-Based Cognition and Persona



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1. Introduction

The aim of this very short publication is to introduce the reader to an alternative way of understanding human behavior, paradigms of thinking (thought patterns), and personality. The aim is not to introduce the reader to existing psychological schools of thought in the world of psychology or to teach the reader what the different psychological models entail. There are many publications to read that do this in a very detailed way, and there are no intentions here to repeat the work that has been done extensively by scholars and students. If the reader wants an overview of some of the different approaches, theories, and models, please download the book 'Shadowmatch Success for All' for free. You can find it on www.shadowmatch.com. The alternative is to ask ChatGPT to write you a summary of the primary psychological models and schools of thought in the science of psychology. This publication is concise, and there is a list of additional readings at the end - should the reader be interested in referencing some of the statements. There is, however, a point to be made. This publication invites the reader to consider a new way of understanding human behavior, habits, thought patterns (paradigms), and personality. There are no references for what this publication presents as a way of looking at the unique combination of the above-mentioned constructs.

There is nothing new in what this publication wants to communicate. What it is, is a simplified way of putting things together and making sense of how we function. This helps those who want to align their understanding of human behavior with this framework to have a clearer and more simplified picture of the topic of human behavior. But this is just an invitation. The aim is not to convince or to challenge. It is not to criticize or denounce other frameworks. It is for this reason that there is no overview or criticism of other theories, and no examining of 'thinking errors' made by those who advocate other frameworks. This is an invitation to think, consider and decide. Despite this invitational approach, this is a very firm statement of understanding human behavior.

2. Base Concepts

To follow the arguments presented in this publication, it is important to clarify a few basic positions that this publication uses, and to clarify these concepts to ensure that the reader and the content of this book are aligned in terms of a shared understanding of some basic words that are used.

The first is the idea that, as humans, we are something separate from our biology. This publication works consistently with the integrated unity of a human being as a single unit that functions as one reality. This publication doesn't distinguish body, mind, and soul. The position it takes is that these constructs cannot be held as separate sub-entities of our existence. When reference is made in this publication to a person, a human being, people, and an individual, it refers to a fully integrated functional being that is not divided into different sub-structures or semi-isolated sub-beings that exist in one person. This has implications that must be considered. What happens in our thinking manifests in our physical bodies, our health, and our relationships. But, the opposite is even more powerful. What our bodies do, co-creates our thinking, health, motivation, relationships, and all the other constructs we might list. Stress at work influences relationships. Healthy relationships manifest in high productivity - or sometimes a change in productivity. What we eat influences our thinking, and what we continuously think influences our eating (as an example). We are functional units not to be dissected.

The second concept to clarify has to do with the idea that thinking and doing are separate functions of our lives. In this publication, it is not treated as separate activities - despite the challenges of conceptualizing this as an integrated unit. The position of this publication is that thinking and doing (taking physical action) are actions. Thinking is as much an action as running and swimming. When someone thinks it is a hard-working action.

This brings us to the third point of clarification. The brain learns the quickest from the information it receives when we do things. Once the brain has learned

something, it uses that learning to manage our behavior. Physical activity is a thousand times more efficient as a neuro-teaching method than any other method of teaching the brain. To underline this statement, a few examples will immediately prove this point. If we want to teach someone to ride a bicycle, we can use three methods. The one is to let our student read books about the engineering and mechanics of riding a bicycle. The second is to let our student watch videos of people who are very good at riding a bicycle. The third is to give our student a bicycle and have someone hold and run next to the bicycle for the first three short rides. The student must keep on trying until they get it right. How long do you think it will take the student following methods one and two to learn how to ride a bicycle? They will never learn it! Period. How long do you think the student following method three will take to learn to ride a bicycle? One day! This is true about everything the brain must learn. Doing is by far the most effective way in which the brain learns. One more example. Teaching someone to land an airplane is another good example. There are hundreds of books, training manuals, and videos that a student pilot can read and watch. Will this teach the brain how to land an airplane? No! What does? The real experience of landing an airplane is the only way to learn this ability. To repeat, this publication takes a behavioristic approach. We learn (most effectively) by doing. Shadowmatch has a saying:

If you want to change your life, change your habits!

Last on the list to clarify has to do with changing our lives. How do we change, and how do we build a better quality of life? This publication takes a specific position. We build better lives by doing better things; not by discussing better things, or by planning, or by setting better goals. We don't build better lives by holding on to the trauma we've been through or failures we've had; nor by discussing our failures with whoever wants to listen to them. We build better lives by doing better things.

None of the above are new ideas. It is just important to make a very clear note of how this publication works with these well-known principles.

3. Habits

This publication will continuously refer to habits. It is, therefore, important to understand what it means. A habit can best be described as a behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to manifest automatically with no or minimal conscious control. Habits are formed through a process of repetition and reinforcement, whereby a particular behavior or routine becomes more automatic over time. Habits can be both positive and negative, with a decisive and significant impact on an individual's life, relationships, health, and well-being.

Habits can be developed intentionally or unintentionally and can be influenced by a range of factors, including environmental cues, social norms, and individual motivation. Habits can be difficult to change or break, particularly if they have become deeply embedded over time. However, with effort and persistence, habits can be modified or replaced with more positive and beneficial behaviors to improve health, productivity, relationships, and overall well-being.

A few contributing aspects make it easy for habits to form. The behavior must repeat. The behavior must give the subject a sense of success. The behavior must serve a meaningful purpose in the life of the person.

The way to understand this is very simple. In the most uncomplicated way, the basic premise is that our actions create our cognitive activities. The brain is programmed by behavior or actions. It is very difficult to challenge the aforementioned statement. If a behavior is repeated, the neurons connect as a process of learning, and it happens in such a way that we experience the actions to be less of a conscious effort and more habitual. Habits are formed by the repetition of behavior. Habits are semi-contextual. They function optimally in the environment where they were learned and less optimally in a new and unknown environment. Strong habits find a way to function irrespective of a changing environment. See the case study below.

A strong, well-embedded habit of taking ownership of tasks can, for example, let people take on tasks that are beyond their capabilities. The habit has taken control of the behavior of the individual - even though the individual is not capable of doing the job.

Habits are not independent. Habits are also not isolated behavioral constructs. Habits rely on each other; they influence and can even inhibit each other.



Candice worked as an auditor in a company where she did audits on corporate accounts. She got frustrated with her job and wanted to do something different. Her strongest habits were problem solving, innovation, and the habit of connecting to people, building relationships and working with teams where collaboration and shared tasks are key drivers for the collective success of the team. Her current job relied on exactly the opposite of all these very strong behavioral patterns or habits.

At an informal family event, she listened to her uncle, who had his own car dealership franchise - a full franchise. What this means is that they sell these top-end German cars, and they service and repair them. He then mentioned that his workshop manager had resigned, and he didn't have a replacement person to manage the workshop. The technical guys he had either didn't want to manage the workshop, or they didn't have the behavior to be a manager. She then, without thinking, said to her uncle that she would run the workshop for him. He was a bit shocked, but he kept his cool and asked her to come to his dealership the next week for coffee. She had a look at her diary, and the Monday morning at 10 am, she was in his office. Her uncle planned to show her the workshop to turn her idea of becoming a workshop manager down in a friendly and positive way. When they walked into the workshop, she had a

conversation with two of the technical guys. She said to her uncle that the workshop should function as a customer service center. She also asked if he would mind introducing her to the workshop team. Her people habits and the habit to connect with people and build relationships came into action. After a discussion of about 15 minutes, she asked them if they would like her to be their manager, and they all – in one voice – said yes. Her uncle was stressed. He wanted a mechanic to be the manager, not an auditor. She then asked the team when they would like her to start. They all said as soon as possible. Now her uncle had a problem. She appointed herself as the new workshop manager. He decided to give it a go. In his office, he said to her that he would give her the job but only for a three-month trial, and then they would decide the way forward. She immediately resigned from her job, and two weeks later she started her new career as a workshop manager.

Ten years on, she was acknowledged as one of the best workshop managers in the business. Her strongest habits found a space where they (these strong habits) could flourish. Irrespective of the fact that the environment was totally different from the environment where these habits were learned. She learned these strong habits when she started skydiving at a very young age in her father's business. He had a skydiving school; he trained a very strong formation skydiving team, and she became an instructor with her dad at a very young age. She did this until she qualified as a chartered accountant. Her habits were strong enough to transcend the context. She turned the workshop into a positive experience for the employees and for clients to visit. Her uncle couldn't believe what she did, or to put it in more accurate terms, what her habits were capable of doing in a job for which she had no skills or qualifications.

Soft habits are very selective and contextually bordered. These habits only function when the context is conducive for the habit to come into action. Soft habits work for a person, and they actively guide behavior when the task is within the contextual sphere where these soft habits have been programmed into the neuro connections of the brain. Soft habits do not indicate an inability

to do something. Instead, they indicate conditional, selective, and specifically focused behavior. In most cases, soft habits are active in areas where they can call for support on the strong habits in the brain. If the situation and the task don't fall within the comfort span of a soft habit, two things happen. The individual will shy away from the task or, if that is not an option, the individual will try to use active conscious control and focused attention to execute the task. This is very tiring for the brain, and it cannot be done for a long period of time. The brain will do everything possible to turn these tasks into a habit so that the demand on the brain is less stressful. Unfortunately, some individuals have unpredictable and unexplainable resistance to the formation of specific habits. See the case study below.

Case Study

Andrew worked as a medical doctor in his own private practice. His patients were predominantly families with everyday health challenges. Ear infections, sore



throats, muscle pains, eye infections, etc. Once every three or six months, someone with more severe medical conditions in need of medical care would come to his practice, and he would then just refer them for specialist medical assessment and treatment. Then things changed. His children went to high school, and because they had special needs, the family had to move to a big city. He couldn't get a private practice going, and he took a job in a big hospital working in the trauma unit.

His soft (very soft!) habits were propensity to change, innovation, problem solving and team inclination. In this context, propensity to change is the habit of adapting quickly and decisively to new demands in a new context with alternative ways of doing things. Innovation is the habit of creating alternative ways of doing things that might (or might not) be better than the set ways. The

fact is - it is different. Problem solving doesn't need explanation, whilst the habit of team inclination is the behavior of working collaboratively with a team who depends on each other for their collective success. Andrew couldn't do the most basic routine tasks. Stitching up a wound freaked him out. Nurses did this as part of their everyday routines. Forcing a pipe down the throat of a patient was something he just couldn't do. Dealing with serious injuries, lots of blood, and people on the edge of death stressed him to the point where he resigned. His soft habits resisted the learning process, and he went back to a small practice with low-key challenges.

Sometimes people just can't build stronger habits necessary for specific tasks and working conditions. In some cases, we can determine why this happens, but in most cases, it is unpredictable - mostly beyond our framework of understanding, and even unexplainable. Habits take a specific shape in a specific context to let the individual act in a specific manner. We do not consciously plan our behavior. In most situations and under most conditions, our behavior just happens - it is mostly on autopilot. We are not unaware of what we do, but we do not consciously and actively plan the way we live our lives. Our habits are mostly in control of our lives.

In a publication by Harvard Business Review (see the specific reference at the end of this publication), it is stated that 95% of our behavior is habitual. In a publication listed as ScienceDaily, the following statement is of importance: "Our minds don't always integrate in the best way possible. Even when you know the right answer, you can't make yourself change the habitual behavior". (Wendy Wood, August 2014).

Strong habits, contextual habits (the ones we use every day without even noticing), and soft habits (the ones we only use selectively) shape our behavior.

This alternative perspective on human behavior is based on the first neurological and behavioristic fact that our behavior is largely the manifestation of habits.

4. Cognitive Context Engagement

Theme-Saturated Paradigms (Mindsets)

All people have paradigms about specific life themes. These can best be described as the framework that structures the way an individual understands a specific life theme, topic, theory, or philosophy. It is the way we think about certain disciplines, philosophies, fields of interest, or topics. With this, there is a word of caution. Some individuals think they have a specific paradigm (mindset) about a certain field or life theme, but it is not their true paradigm. It is a paradigm they voice, not one that they live by. They speak the language of a certain paradigm, but it doesn't manifest in their behavior. A true paradigm is when our thinking and doing regarding a specific topic are aligned. These are the paradigms shaped by our habits. False paradigms are shaped by ambition and imagination. True paradigms are shaped by our habits. A few examples are necessary to demonstrate what themes typically function as paradigms. The use of sophisticated artificial intelligence systems to solve problems and get things done is, for example, related to the paradigm the individual holds in relation to what computers can do. The role and position of children in a family could be a specific paradigm. When a group of people share a certain paradigm, it can play a defining role in the culture of such a group. This then manifests in their behavior, and over time it becomes the collective habit of the group. Another example of a paradigm could be the correlation between pollution and global warming. The paradigms of premodernism, modernism, postmodernism, and meta-modernism are very good examples of different paradigms people hold about the world. We can cluster these cognitive constructs under different headings: paradigm,

mindset, worldview, and perspective. These are the most commonly used descriptors of the cognitive constructs described as a paradigm.

Paradigms develop over time. True paradigms are learned cognitive constructs, and these paradigms are aligned with behavior patterns or habits. One feeds the other. The more we behave in alignment with our paradigms, the more these paradigms become habits, and the easier it is for the subject to become fixated on a specific paradigm that is related to a specific theme embedded as a habit.

Case Study

Jenifer grew up in a family with very specific patterns in their relationships and very rigid behavioral habits. Keep in mind that this is a case study, and there is nothing judgmental in anything mentioned. It is just a statement of facts. Jenifer's childhood was positive, very fulfilling, and for all practical reasons, very



happy. She was free from all forms of abuse, her parents were very good people, they went to church every Sunday, and her dad and mom served on committees of the church and the community. They lived their lives with a black-and-white approach. Things are right or wrong. There is no such thing as grey. Sort of wrong is wrong. Dad was the head of the family, and what he said was not to be challenged. Mom and the children had to ask for his advice, and what he said was final. Mom was very intelligent, but she was also subjected to the authority of dad. Children had no say and no opinion. Jenifer learned some very specific habits. You don't talk back to authority. You don't do your own thing. You do what you are told. You work hard and do what is expected of you. If you have a different opinion, keep it to yourself. Agree with authority and don't experiment with new ideas. All of these became habits. She had no need to think about these behavioral patterns. They were well-embedded behaviors of intense habitual nature.

She went to university, and she qualified as a nurse. She got married to James, who grew up in a different family culture. James' mother was a free-minded individual. His dad wanted her to challenge his ideas. He wanted her to decide on stuff independently and do her own thing. James' dad always said that the kids must decide for themselves, and his wife must not ask for his advice. She must make the call and do what she wants to do. Even the kids had to make up their own independent minds from a very early age. James learned the habits of independent people; people who must do their own thing. He gave himself the authority to do his own thing.

Their marriage became challenged. Jenifer experienced that James didn't want to support her; he didn't want to be the head of the family and give guidance to her and their children. She voiced a family paradigm of understanding how families work in many discussions with her husband, and she even asked her minister for advice. This paradigm is a pattern of thinking created by habits embedded because of the repetition of behavior. Her paradigm didn't come from nowhere, out of thin air, or from a book she read. This paradigm was rooted in her habits; habits she learned over a very long time. James, on the other hand, had a different paradigm - also rooted in habits. People must be independent. They must think and decide for themselves. They must not run for advice on all kinds of everyday challenges. They saw a counselor who advised them to change their mindsets. This advice was as good as telling someone to stop the war between Russia and Ukraine by chewing bubblegum. Habits don't change that easily. It is a process.

Our way of thinking about themes has reasons behind it. It stands on something. It is rooted in some feeding ground. What does it stand on? What feeds it? Our habits. If we must coach this couple towards a better relationship, we must work on their habits. If they want to live better lives, they must repeatedly do better things.

In summary, the conscious awareness we have (conscious content) has three sub-constructs. Number one is our constant conscious awareness of our

environment through our senses. Number two is our cognitive attention to successfully execute the task at hand, and number three is the paradigms we hold in relation to specific themes shaped by our habits. All three of these rest on the embedded patterns of behavior in the brain that function as habits. It is the constructs of our habits that shape our cognitive consciousness, and our habits are primarily formed by our behavior that repeats. Our cognitive awareness is shaped by our habits. Three layers are functional: our senses, the task at hand, and a complicated set of paradigms we hold.

Senses and the Environment

Humans are consciously aware of the information the brain receives through their senses. What we touch, see, hear, smell, and taste is an active part of our state of thinking and our consciousness. How we react to it can be habitual, or it can also be because of a series of conscious decisions we make (strongly influenced and directed by our habits). Behavior is always contextual. Our context triggers behavior through our senses, and it follows patterns based on a complex system of habits that react to cues. Sometimes the actions of people are almost completely habitual, and their cognitive energy becomes completely unaware of the environment. This is when our actions are so habitual that we are completely unaware of our actions. Sometimes people become very aware of their environment and the demands they face. In this state our behavior is still strongly guided by our habits, but we are very aware of our actions and the environment. In both situations, overriding our habitual patterns is not easy.

Mindfulness

The term 'Mindfulness' has lately (since 1970) gained much traction in the world of psychology and amongst professionals working in this field.

In an attempt to understand the history of this approach, it seems that the term 'mindfulness' was first used in psychology by the American psychologist and philosopher William James in the late 19th century. James used the term in his

book "The Principles of Psychology", published in 1890, where he defined mindfulness as "the faculty of being aware of the contents of mental states or processes". However, it was not until the 1970s that the concept of mindfulness gained more attention in psychology when Jon Kabat-Zinn developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Since then, mindfulness has become an increasingly popular area of research and practice in psychology and related fields - with many different definitions and approaches being developed. *(A selection of definitions and references are in the list for additional references at the end of this publication).*

Reading through the definitions makes it difficult to determine what we should take as a standard and widely accepted definition without touching on ethical and judgmental concepts as part of a scientific approach. This publication defines mindfulness as a state of consciousness in which the individual is fully aware of and focused on the demands of the moment with the aim of taking controlled action.

To align this with the fact that people live predominantly in habit mode, the fact that a person can 'switch' to a conscious state of mindfulness should not be an arguable point. But it takes additional energy, and the moment the individual relaxes their mindful state of consciousness, they immediately fall back into habit mode. This is how we take control of a challenging situation in moments when we know we have to 'be in the moment' in order to bring our actions together successfully. Mindfulness is a powerful way of taking control of a moment. It is very demanding, and it doesn't change our behavior to be sustainable as a way of living. It changes moments. It is very hard work for the brain. It doesn't change the way we live our lives. To change the way we live our lives, the moments of mindful actions must repeat many times in a meaningful way, with purpose and a sense of fulfillment. Then the actions become habits, and we don't need to switch to a state of mindfulness to accomplish the result we want in similar situations. This does not undermine the

value of mindfulness. Everybody does it. It is the natural way we do challenging things. But it is very hard work for the brain. We easily experience fatigue, and in most instances, the mindful state is not sustainable for long periods of time.

Humans are not only a series of behaviors. Humans have brains, and they have a cognitive thinking capability that we must give the space it needs. There are a few primary functions of our cognitive awareness and thinking processes that we need to clarify.

The more we take conscious control of our behavior, the more we suppress the role of habits in what we do. The less we actively and consciously control our behavior, the more our habits will take control and determine our actions. It must be noted that our habits will always play a role in what we consciously do. The question is, to what level will our habits play a role? It depends on how strong the habits are embedded in the brain, on the one side, but it also depends on the intensity with which we want to consciously control our behavior.



Mary grew up and went to college without any modern technology. She worked with paper books, in lecture rooms, and with tools she could fully control. When she started her career as a physiotherapist, she

would visit the bank and ask the branch manager for a loan. She wrote a cheque to pay for the things she had to pay for. She knew the mechanic who worked on her car. Things then started to change. More digital, more virtual, and paperless. Mary didn't pay attention to the changes in technology and the working of stuff; and her habits of working the way she grew up stayed unchallenged. She got a mobile phone but only used it to make voice calls.

Her children grew up in a digital age. They got their mobile phones when they started school in grade one. They understand TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Cisco, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and many more. They know how to make videos, send videos to friends, and attend college via Teams and Zoom. Her children left school, and they started working in another country. Talking to Mary must now happen via Zoom and WhatsApp. For her children, using these apps is a habit embedded in the neurons of their brains as rote behavior. They do it automatically without thinking about how to do it. They do it with minimal conscious engagement (habitual behavior). Not for Mary. She must concentrate, focus, and suppress her habits of face-to-face relationships. She must take conscious control of her Zoom behavior. Communicating in a habitual way with her children is now pushed back by the fact that she must actively take conscious control of the new demands on her behavior to communicate via systems. For her children, it is a normal habit of life. It is easy because it has become their habit. For Mary, it is hard work. She must take conscious control and focus because her brain doesn't have embedded habitual patterns to do it.

The primary state of consciousness (deliberate cognitive awareness) is mostly, but not only, related to the following interlinked cognitive awareness constructs.

Mindfulness and Habits

When an individual engages in a task, it can be done in a habitual manner, or the subject can take conscious control of the task. Taking conscious control of a task is hard work for the brain and it is important to note that our actions are - despite our conscious control - still habitual by nature. Taking conscious control is tiring, and it consumes lots of energy. Anybody who has worked where continuous conscious concentration is necessary, knows how quickly this wears you down. Don't be mistaken; when an individual is fully conscious of a task and they focus on the successful execution of it, habits play an active role in support of the conscious control faculties that direct the actions. We are

never free of our habitual patterns embedded in the neurons of the brain. Yes, we can consciously override a habit or a group of habits for a short period of time, but it is very hard work, and the moment we become less actively conscious of the task, habits will take control again.

Examples of deliberate conscious, focused task execution can be found in many areas of our behavior. Listening to a speech or a lecture, doing a presentation, writing a book, landing an airplane, handling conflict, riding a mountain bike on a hillside track: are all examples of tasks most people can only do if they are consciously in the moment. Assembling a complicated mechanical system like a watch or a gearbox can also be added to the list. Even though these are examples of tasks that mostly require the individual to be very consciously active, they are still influenced to a lesser or more prominent degree by our habits. For one individual, doing a presentation could be a very habitual task. For others, it could be a task that needs active conscious control and focus. The fact is that the human brain doesn't function without the influence of learned patterns or habits.

There is, however, something very interesting. The more the task at hand can rely on mature, well-embedded habits; the less stress it will cause for the subject doing the task. The more cognitive control (with minimal habitual support for the action or task) is necessary to execute a task; the more stress will be experienced by the subject. Habits make life easier, much easier.

Case Study

Ferdi grew up in a small town far away from the sea. By the age of eighteen, his parents moved to a bigger town, and they lived on the seafront. They had a classic beach house. Ferdi could walk out of their



house onto the beach. Ferdi had never been on a surfboard. He made friends

with his peers at college and discovered that they were all very active surfers. They invited him to one of their social events that they organized around surfing as the activity for the day. One of his friends lent him a surfboard. He tried to get onto the board for about two hours without success. That evening he experienced tiredness that was so intense that he couldn't stay awake. He went to bed very early. He slept for more than twelve hours. Over time his friends gave him a few tips. He bought his own surfboard, and within about three weeks of relentless practicing, he could, for short moments, stand upright on the board. A year on, Ferdi could stand on the surfboard with minimum conscious effort and concentration. It became a rote behavior. This is a term used to describe a habitual behavior so strong that it happens without or with minimal conscious control and interference.

There are many examples like this: riding a bicycle, lecturing, handling conflict, and taking ownership of a task. There are many, many more such examples. The more we do things, the more habitual these actions become; and the less they are reliant on cognitive and conscious control. This is a rule that can be applied: an increase in habitual behavior implies a decrease in conscious effort and control. The less habitual the action is, the more cognitive control it needs.

In summary, mindfulness is the natural way of taking control of a challenging moment or situation. It is very hard work, and the moment the individual is not mindful and stops giving full conscious attention to the situation, they fall back into habit mode. In order to change our lives, we must change our habits. In order to take control of a challenging moment, switch to a mindful state and make the moment work. But don't expect a mindful moment to change your life. It won't! This is the way we do things in anyway: we live our habits, and we 'switch on' to handle challenging moments/tasks.

5. Personality – A Behavioral Portrait

This is the most challenging part of this publication. The author experiences difficulties in defining 'personality'. The most broadly accepted definition of personality (as per most definitions) is that it refers to the unique and relatively enduring pattern of thoughts, feelings, perspectives, ideas, characteristics, traits, thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors that characterize an individual's response to the environment. It seems like scholars agree with the idea that personality encompasses a wide range of traits and characteristics (with no clear distinction between what exactly all these constructs are): including temperament, values, attitudes, interests, and habits - that shape an individual's perceptions, motivations, and interactions with others. (There is a list of reading available at the end of this publication should the reader want to know more about the many different definitions of personality). Somewhere in the references below (Verywellmind), the following statement catches the attention of the author: *'Although there are many definitions of personality, most focus on the pattern of behaviors and characteristics that can help predict and explain a person's behavior.'* This is more applicable to the construct of habits than to that of personality. It demonstrates how scattered the concept of personality functions amongst scholars and authors. It seems like they all have their own definition of what personality is. Read the full page on Wikipedia to experience how complex and scattered the idea of personality is.

For many years, the author has refused to engage the idea of personality. The reason is obvious: the scientific world has not yet decided what personality is. This doesn't mean that there must be a single definition. But there must be much more coherence in the scientific world of psychology. With that in mind, the word personality is far too important to just be wiped out of our vocabulary. With all these challenges in mind, an effort will now be made to use the word with a very specific meaning.

Where does the word come from? It originates in the Latin word 'persona'. This refers (in its early days) to the mask worn by an actor to present/portray/project a specific identity to the audience. The projected image/identity is defined by the way the audience got the message from the portrayed image of the identity of the mask. It is the image seen by the audience that gives them (the audience) an understanding and framework of the identity of the person portrayed by the mask. The word personality then relates to the word 'person'. In ancient Latin, this refers to a human being - simple and without complications. Personality, therefore, could best be described as the identity of a person as it is perceived by the audience. It is general knowledge that words do not have meaning. Words get meaning in a specific context and sentence. Over time the meaning of words in different sentences and contexts change. This is what happened with the word 'personality', and we are now at a place where it has actually lost its meaning even within a sentence and context. For the purpose of this publication, we will go back to some kind of an original meaning. The image that bystanders see and experience as the identity of a person. It is the identity that manifests through our presence. What are the building blocks of this 'persona' or identity? Everything. It is defined by the audience based on what they see and experience. There will not be congruency amongst individual members of the audience on what they see and experience as the persona portrayed by the person/mask.

The persona or identity projected by a specific person has two sides to it. What the individual projects and what the bystanders perceive/see/experience. What people around us see and experience as our persona/personality is mostly defined by a very complicated mixture of four ingredients: our physical reality, our paradigms, our habits/behavioral patterns and the context where we function, and the unique observational prism through which the observer sees and experiences the person whose identity is observed.

For this model, personality is the way people, in a specific context, view the identity of a subject (person) as it manifests in their behavior. Persona is

primarily in the eye of the beholder. Is it stable? Yes. What does that mean? Under more or less similar conditions in more or less the same company of people, a person will tend to project more or less the same persona. Is it consistent? In other words, do people portray the same persona across different contexts? No. Because the context changes and the observers change. The identity portrayed by a professional auditor in a boardroom and the identity portrayed by the same professional auditor playing with children on a beach is not the same. If it so happens that the auditor doesn't adapt, there are serious problems. The persona we portray must be dynamic and context sensitive. But it is always the manifestation of behaviors embedded as patterns/habits.

The Underlying Structure of Personality

The question now is to determine what the underlying structure of the image (persona) we project is made of. This is where a specific position is taken: our habits and our physical realities as they manifest in a specific context under specific conditions are the two defining and form-giving constructs of personality. This paper doesn't want to delve into the physical realities of people. It is not necessary, but some basic points must be mentioned. It is, without doubt, one of the most defining components of the mask we wear in the presence of others to define our personalities. Then, at the core of everything is, without doubt, what Aristotle said: *'We are the sum of our actions, and therefore our habits make all the difference.'* (See Aristotle under references).

Final Notes on Personality

It is not the aim of this publication to change the way personality is defined. The aim is to make the position clear about the place of personality in the equation of this behavioral framework called 'Habit-Based Cognition and Persona'. A simple approach is necessary. There is broad agreement about the fact that personality is the persona, mask, and image of identity portrayed

by a person. This becomes clear when we study the history of the word, and it is true when we read through many definitions presented over time. There is a problem, though. Who decides what this portrayed identity is? The answer is obvious: the audience, the people around me who observe my presence, image, and behavior. They build an identity of who and what I am. I might project – in my view – a specific persona (personality), but that is, without a doubt, not how the people around me interpret and scope my personality. They might see and experience something completely different. Who now holds the correct image of my persona? Me? My wife? My colleagues? My family? My golf friends? Who must answer a series of questions to determine what my personality is? Can I really do it? Or should a combination of the people around me do it? My persona is an image in the minds of the people around me, and there is not a good correlation between the images they have about me; and their perceptions also don't correlate with my own image of my persona. Some people might experience me as cold and aggressive. Others as very kind, soft, and caring.

In addition to the above, our habits are very reliable constructs to predict behavior. Habits are factual and predictable. It can be measured as a behavioral pattern that repeats. Suppose someone has an argument with a service provider, and we ask bystanders what the person is doing. In that case, there will be very high congruency in their answers: the person is having a fight with a customer liaison officer.

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive model that places the different aspects of what we do, think, and portray into a single framework. Such a framework might not be perfect, but it must be relatively easy to understand and work with. This is what this publication wants to achieve. The summary at the end is that model.

6. Notes about Emotions

It is important not to underestimate the role of emotions in our everyday lives. It influences the way people act, work, play, relate to others, and manage their personal lives. Despite the ongoing discussion about the difference between feelings and emotions; in this publication these two terms are treated as interchangeable.

The word emotion has its roots in Latin. The Latin word is 'emotio' which means 'stirring up, agitation, disturbance'. This word is derived from the word 'emovere' which is a verb that combines 'e' (out) with 'movere' (to become). 'Emotion' suggests a sense of being moved or stirred up from a state of rest into a state of agitation or action.

At the end of this publication, as part of the references, the reader will find an overview of the five most important theories about emotion as a psychological construct, as well as a few short references about emotion and the way it has been described over the period of applied psychology.

In this publication, the aim is to build an integrated and easy-to-understand outline of how certain psychological constructs could be framed and used as a model that works in the practical sense towards self-guidance and support offered to others.

Emotions Made Easy

It appears that there are only two emotions that humans experience. How people experience these two emotions, how it manifests in their behavior, and how they react to it are diverse and thus individually unique. Different individuals react differently to the same stimulus/context/influence. All emotions manifest in some sort of behavior. It gives color to the identity of the individual. It co-defines the way we experience each other, and it carries a message about the different paradigms we live with. Most important of all, it manifests as a pattern or a habit.

The easiest and most comprehensive position to take is that humans experience only two emotional clusters or groups that are related to only two headline emotional states: a negative emotion as a result of failure, and a positive state related to an experience of success.

The Emotion of Failure

This is a cluster of negative energy we experience that could be called many things, and we refer to it in many ways. The core issue is a sense of failure. People describe it as anger, pain, fear, anxiety, sadness, no energy to do things, loss of interest in life and general activities, difficulties with relationships, aggressiveness, etc. At the core of all these references lies failure, perceived failure, and fear of failure. The fear of failure is an anticipated failure, even though the anticipated failure has not yet happened – or will never happen. These are all stimuli for negative emotions. There are many more aspects that can be added to the list of this negative experience. Rejection, loss, an end to what was good, all kinds of anticipated subjective fears and perceptions. This happens when the subject experiences a threat beyond their abilities to deal with such a threat. A situation that is out of hand, or any situation where the subject receives information about a real or a perceived threat, culminates to the point where a sense of failure becomes their dominant experience of the situation.

All the above happens when the subject is outpowered by the situation. Be it real or perceived. For the subject, there is little difference between a real failure, a perceived failure, or a perceived possible failure in the making.

The Emotion of Success and Winning

This is the other end of our emotional state. An experience of winning, moving positively forward, reaching a specific goal, and delivering something meaningful. It could be about a relationship that works, a career that is successful, acceptance from people at work, running a marathon, success with an exam, seeing loved ones, or spending time with people you enjoy. The

common denominator is a sense of winning: the experience of being on top of challenges and feeling stronger than the enemy at hand. It generates positive and moving energy in the person, and they feel strong, joyful, able, and fulfilled. They want to share their experiences with others and, in doing so, regenerate the positive energy they experience with the aim to keep it alive. The reason why people want to share their successes and their winnings is to perpetuate the energy they get from a repeat of the experience.

The Catch

When it happens that someone gets trapped in a situation where they lack strong habits to deal with the challenge, they can easily become prone to fail or to perceive their efforts as a failure - irrespective of the facts. A negative state of emotions can become chronic. In other words, it is, in a subtle way, always present and it becomes a pattern (habit). This development in the life of an individual then manifests as a habit of engaging the world from a position of expected failure and rejection, even if the subject is more than capable of successfully engaging the challenge. This constant state of failure holds many risks for the individual, and it must be addressed through a coaching process over a longer period of time. The habit of losing must be turned into a habit of winning. A habit of winning is programmed into the neurons of the brain through repetitive actions with a meaningful winning result and experience for the subject.

When the subject has behavioral patterns that put them in a strong position when they are in a challenging situation, they experience the challenge as an opportunity to win, show their strength, and succeed. This becomes a sense of success even before they engage in the challenge, and their chances of winning are much greater. The moment they succeed with the challenge, they build their winning habits even stronger, and they become increasingly inclined to take on more challenging problems. This is why success breeds success. These winning individuals are more likely to experience a sense of happiness and to live in a positive emotional state.

The question is how to move into a state of success, winning and happiness and how to stay in that state. The position taken by this publication is that this is hard work. The subject must learn the habits of continuous success, winning, and progress. This must be done as a program. A series of small actions. Easy actions that the subject can do successfully and to continuously celebrate their success. It is about building a series of many small experiences of winning. Our emotional state is directly related to our self-experience about the way we deal with the challenges of life. This is based on the way we successfully or unsuccessfully use our experience, knowledge, and our habits to live a winning (or losing) life. This is not a discussion with whoever. It is hard work. Doing things every day that shows tangible success and winning over the challenges of life.

It has everything to do with how the environment accommodates our behavioral patterns. People experience situations, activities, relationships, careers, and their playground as a complex series of winning and losing. Success and failure. The basics are as follows: the individual must be in a space and place that accommodates their habits and their mindsets in a positive manner. The individual must perceive the context as positive and friendly. They must be free to deal with the challenges they face in a positive and successful manner. This creates emotions of success and winning. If the subject is not in such a positive situation, there are only two options. The first is to get out and find a more accommodating situation and environment. The second is to embark on a process of building patterns of success and winning despite the challenges they face. Both these options require lots of hard work. It is a process, and the best option is to journey with a coach towards a better life. It is not a discussion. It is a process.

Final Comment on Emotion

There is no such thing as a neutral state. The author's concern is that many people have become so used to an unacceptable level of unhappiness, sadness, and a constant feeling of failure that they accept this as their state of happiness. This state of conditioned unhappiness deprives people from being

motivated to work towards success and winning. They have learned a habit of being unhappy, and they are fine with it. This is unacceptable, and as a community, we must work relentlessly to guide one another not to become trapped in any state of sadness and failure, but to work on micro successes that will stack towards building a winning and happy individual.

7. Practical Guidelines

Whenever we want to help an individual to become their optimal self, we must focus on the core element that shapes everything we are and everything we do: habits! It is our habits that shape our cognitive awareness, our paradigms, and our personalities. Our careers must align with our habits. Our marriages must align with each other's habits. Our stress levels are related to a misalignment of our habits and the demands of our context at work, at home, in society, in our relationships, and in our daily routines. Again, we must take a close look at what Aristotle said: *'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.'*

When we help our fellow humans to live a better life, we help them to build better habits.

- ▶ 'If you want to change your life, change your habits' – A Shadowmatch saying.
- ▶ If you need to build a better persona, build better habits.
- ▶ If you want a better marriage, align your relationship with your own habits and align your actions with the habits of your spouse.
- ▶ If you want the optimal career, align your working environment, the content of your career, and the actions of your job with your habits.
- ▶ If you want to function optimally as part of a team, there must be an alignment between your habits and the habits of the team members you work with.

- ▶ If you want a fulfilling home, make it a place where your habits can function freely.
- ▶ If you want a healthier body, change your eating and exercise habits.
- ▶ The optimal way of living a fulfilled life is to align the demands on the individual with their habits and to continuously work on small actions of winning and success. These micro actions become habits. These habits create an emotional life experience of winning and success. This is the foundation of a meaningful, happy life. It makes it possible for the person to live in an emotional state of fulfillment anchored in their habits.

The question we must ask is about the practicalities. How do we reconstruct our lives and our habits to be more aligned? This statement has implications to be considered. The brain learns habits very easily, but it doesn't want to unlearn them. A good example is to imagine helping a professional cyclist to unlearn how to ride a bicycle. Or to unlearn the habit of playing a musical instrument. Once a pattern has been formed in the brain, the brain holds on to that pattern. This has more advantages than what is normally mentioned. Imagine we must relearn actions every time we need them. Imagine someone who must ride a bicycle to work every morning has to learn how to ride a bicycle every day. Neural connections form very easily and quickly in the brain; luckily, they stay.

The practical question now needs attention. How do we align our habits with the demands of life? Basically, four options must be considered.

- 1. Change the demands on the person.** Let's say, for example, that someone was in a technical job doing technical work for a few years. They then get promoted to be a manager, and the work they must do is to manage a team. This new job places high demands on their people habits, and they find it very difficult and demanding. The first, and probably easiest option, is to change their job and move them back to the technical stuff. It is important to always focus on the simplest solution to such a challenge. Take

a pragmatic approach. The above-mentioned outcome could, in many situations, be the simplest solution, but it might not always be possible. Other challenges we face are not that simple. Let's say a couple has been married for five years. They have a baby, and their routines change suddenly and with high intensity. The husband doesn't have a strong habit of changing, and routine is one of his strongest habits. In this case, it is not that easy to change the job/situation/demands. Changing the demands on the individual is a process of aligning the context and environmental challenges with the subject's habits.

2. **Build stronger habits.** It is relatively easy for the brain to learn a habit or to build stronger habits. The husband in the example above must embark on a process of making one change every day that has a positive outcome. It can be small, but it must be real. He can paint any wall a new color, walk with his wife and child in a park every evening, reorganize the house to accommodate a baby, etc. The aim is to teach the brain to deal with change. This happens only by doing things that repeat, it must be real, and it must be a positive experience for the person. In the example of the technician that was promoted to manage people, a process of strengthening a people-related habit such as altruism, team inclination, leadership, or positive people engagement could go a very long way.
3. **The third option is not so easy. The person must teach their brain a replacement habit.** In the example of the husband above, he could learn a replacement habit to deal with the change in their routines. Here is the problem: to identify what such replacement habit will be and what actions will successfully replace the frustrations. For example, to break the habit of unhealthy eating, this is a good strategy: instead of eating bread, rather drink a glass of water and, in the process, teach the brain to drink water when an urge to eat bread gets the upper hand on the individual. In some cases, this strategy is easy. In some, it is almost impossible.

4. A clever combination of the above is a very good strategy. Let's take the example of the technician who has been made a manager of people. Coach the person to strengthen one or two people-related habits over time and put some technical work back into their job. Then, over time, as the habit of people engagement becomes stronger, reduce the technical content of their work.

A final comment in helping people to live better lives. Assign the person to a coach that works with habits. Coaching is undoubtedly the most powerful way of helping people become their optimal best. The coach must understand that the focus should be on the habits of their clients.

8. Summary: This is the Model

Throughout our lives, we learn habits because of the repetition of behavior that we experience as successful, meaningful, and fulfilling. Sometimes we even learn habits of accepted failures, and these failures then manifest in the patterns of our behaviors or habits. These repetitive actions program the brain, and the programmed behavioral patterns in the brain determine 95% of our behavior - it shapes our cognitive paradigms of understanding our world, and it shapes our personalities. We portray, in a specific context under certain conditions, an identity (persona) through our habitual behavioral patterns. This functions as a mask, identity, or persona. This identity is more a perception of the observer as they see our behavior and as they experience our presence.

9. Final Note by the Author

This publication has a very long history. I'm not a psychologist. I studied for seven years at a highly respected university. Psychology and many other humanity sciences were always part of my academic curriculum which was focused on theology, the ministry, and general people-related subjects. I was a minister of religion for twelve years and specialized in youth ministry and counseling to young people in distress. Many things happened, but I became

obsessed with helping people who got stuck in a life that just didn't work for them. I did many training courses in many aspects of counseling and support. I even did some weird stuff, like studying handwriting analysis up to the point of being qualified as a professional graphologist. Eventually, I concluded that two things need to happen. The first is that people must not fail. Failure causes a compromised inner strength of a person to overcome and deal positively with the challenges of life. The second thing that must happen is that we must be able to help people in distress to live a better life.

To do something positive, I decided to build a system to do exactly that: to help people to build a better life. Since the system went live in 2006, my understanding of different models and methods became focused on the data that I received from the millions of data points gathered by the system, people working with the system, and highly specialized counselors using the system. I became increasingly frustrated. The result: I could only find one model that works for me. I'm uncomfortable with almost all the models. The only one that really made sense (for me) was the behavioristic approach, and that is what lies at the foundation of the system. The system I've built is called Shadowmatch, and all information about the system is available here: www.shadowmatch.com

On a very personal level, my strongest habit is 'To Simplify'. This is the habit that also frustrated me the most. The reason is that I experience difficulty working with models that I either do not understand because there are too many gaps in the logic of the model, or where the model is based on ideas that are not sound. In some models, the theory and logic just don't make intellectual sense. There were more questions than answers in my mind about most of the concepts. The problem is that an effort to discuss the challenges of certain models was not positive. I experienced that professionals decide on a specific model, and they use it, but, in many cases, they do not fully understand it, or they just say words that sound like logic. Another problem is that I couldn't talk to some intellectuals like Sigmund Freud to ask very specific questions. I could

only read the stuff he wrote, and most of it just didn't make sense to me. To criticize is not the way to go. Trying to understand was just a bridge too far for me because I couldn't get my mind around the questions I had on the gaps that I saw in the thinking behind some of these models and paradigms that we use to understand and 'explain' the behavior of people and the troubles they experience. I can list some of the questions I have regarding the most widely accepted theories, but that won't help anybody. It will just create more arguments. I am, however, willing to share one such question to demonstrate my frustration. I am not convinced by the hypothesis of a subconscious mind. Read the notes under references marked as 'Subconscious Mind' below.

Back to my strongest habit: 'To Simplify'. This is what lies in this publication. A model that works for me. This is where I am now. I am convinced that we know almost nothing about the complexities of our own existence, our own thinking, and behavior. But we know something, and that something is all we have to help each other to live better lives. What I don't want to do is to be dishonest with myself. We know something, but what I know is very little, given what I think there is to know. What I did is to package how I see things with the very little something that I have learned in such a way that it makes sense (to me). It works within limits, and it might help others. This is very important: we know very little, and we can only work with what we know. To explain what we can't explain is a good step, and that is how we learn more. But if something works for me, it doesn't mean that it will work for you. We need to invite each other to conversations where we can learn from each other and stop presenting our ideas as final answers. They are not! This is, in no uncertain terms, final. It is not even final in my mind as the author. It might change in the future. It is a journey and a process.

Last final word. This is an invitation to join me in an effort to simplify our understanding of who and what we are, how behavior works, and how we can help each other to live better lives.

Herewith some websites and videos about the system:

- ▶ www.shadowmatch.com
- ▶ www.shadowmatchcoaching.com
- ▶ www.shadowmatchcoaches.com
- ▶ www.why-coaching.com

10. Notes, Definitions and Comments for Additional Reading

This part of the book is for the more serious student. The structure is the same as the outline and structure of the book. Definitions are provided, and the author comments on most of the quotes and definitions. Full academic references are published as a standard list at the end of the definitions and comments by the author.

***Comment:** these are notes by the author of this publication.

Habits

- ▶ “A habit is a learned behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously” (Wood & Neal, 2007, p. 38).

***Comment:** the idea of a subconscious is vague and difficult to grasp – it is a contradictory statement. If something is ‘subconscious’ it doesn't exist.

- ▶ “Habits are automatic, context-dependent responses to situational cues that have been strengthened by prior learning experiences” (Gardner, Lally, & Wardle, 2012, p. 565).

***Comment:** it is a good starting point, but habits are also trans-contextual.

- ▶ “A habit is a stable, enduring, and recurring pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition and becomes automatic with practice” (Verplanken & Wood, 2006, p. 142).

***Comment:** this is great!

- ▶ “Habits are goal-directed behaviors that are cued automatically by situational cues, bypassing conscious awareness and control” (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000, p. 1176).

***Comment:** there are multiple problems with this definition. It is not always goal directed. The words ‘bypassing conscious awareness and control’ is vague and unqualified.

- ▶ “A habit is a mental association between a cue, a response, and the situational context that guides behavior automatically and unconsciously” (Wood & Rünger, 2016, p. 38).

***Comment:** this is good, but the author should have stopped and not brought ‘unconscious’ into the equation.

Habits from a neuroscience perspective

Neuroscientists also have definitions for habits which often emphasize the neural mechanisms underlying habitual behavior. Here are two examples of definitions for habits from a neuroscience perspective:

- ▶ “Habits are learned, context-specific behaviors that are automatically elicited by a specific cue” (Graybiel, 2008, p. 369).

***Comment:** habits are not context specific. They function more actively in some contexts and less in others, but not in a specific context only.

- ▶ “Habits are thought to arise from the strengthening of the synaptic connections between cortical and subcortical regions that are involved in goal-directed behavior, leading to the formation of a motor program that can be triggered by environmental cues without conscious awareness” (Ashby, Turner, & Horvitz, 2014, p. 2).

***Comment:** this is one of the best scientific definitions of habits.

Highly recommended reading on habits

It is fascinating to read how clearly Aristotle formulated his perspectives on habits. More can be found on the internet; below is a link the reader can follow for more information:

Aristotle Quotes: <https://www.azquotes.com/author/524-Aristotle/tag/habit>

Theme-Saturated Paradigms

This is a very brief overview of how these concepts are used and defined by some prominent authors and academics:

Paradigm

- Paradigm: “shared set of assumptions, values, and beliefs that underlie and shape the way people within a community approach problems, questions, and phenomena” (Kuhn, 1962). This definition, put forth by Thomas Kuhn in his influential book “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”, emphasizes the role of paradigms in shaping the way individuals within a particular discipline or field of study approach their work. He sees a correlation between a paradigm and scientific progress.

***Comment:** this is a very narrow perspective, and it has a specific goal in mind: scientific progress. This is too narrow.

- Paradigm in the field of linguistics, refers to “the set of all grammatical rules and categories that are characteristic of a particular language” (Chomsky, 1957).

***Comment:** this definition highlights the idea that a paradigm is not just a set of beliefs or assumptions, but a more concrete set of rules and structures that govern a particular domain. This is a narrow view of a paradigm, and it uses the concept as the rules of a language system.

- ▶ Paradigm can refer to “the shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that underlie and shape a particular culture's understanding of the world and its place within it” (Geertz, 1973).

***Comment:** this definition emphasizes the cultural and social specificity of paradigms and highlights the ways in which they are shaped by historical, social, and political contexts. This is very true, but there is too much emphasis on the collective character of a paradigm.

- ▶ Paradigm in the field of psychology, refers to “a theoretical framework or model that guides research and practice in a particular area of study” (Burr, 1995).

***Comment:** this definition highlights the role of paradigms in shaping research agendas and in guiding the development of new theories and interventions. This definition is too narrow to work with. Although it focuses on ‘the field of psychology’ it still reduces the idea to be very narrow.

- ▶ Paradigm in the field of education, can be defined as “the dominant model or approach to teaching and learning within a particular time and place” (Kuhn, 1970).

***Comment:** this definition highlights the way in which paradigms can change over time and can be shaped by broader societal trends and shifts in cultural norms. The positive side of this definition is the room it creates for a paradigm to be flexible and dynamic.

Mindset

- ▶ A mindset can be defined as “the collection of beliefs and attitudes that shape an individual's perception and interpretation of the world around them” (Dweck, 2006).

***Comment:** this definition emphasizes the role of an individual's beliefs in shaping their experiences and outcomes.

- ▶ Another definition of mindset comes from the field of psychology, where it refers to “the way an individual approaches and responds to challenges and obstacles” (*Duckworth et al., 2007*).

***Comment:** this definition highlights the idea that mindset can influence an individual's behavior and response to adversity. It is very narrow.

- ▶ In the field of business, a mindset can be defined as “the set of attitudes and beliefs that shape an individual's approach to work and professional development” (*Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996*).

***Comment:** this definition emphasizes the role of mindset in shaping an individual's career trajectory and success. This definition is very narrow and only focuses on one aspect of life.

- ▶ A fourth possible definition of mindset on this list comes from the field of education, where it refers to “the beliefs and attitudes that students hold about their own abilities and the nature of intelligence” (*Blackwell et al., 2007*).

***Comment:** this definition highlights the importance of mindset in academic achievement and student success. Again, this is very narrow, with only one aspect in mind. The way we work with the theme (construct) of *mindsets* should not be limited to the academic environment.

- ▶ Finally, in the field of sports psychology, a mindset can be defined as “the set of attitudes and beliefs that athletes hold about their abilities, their opponents, and the challenges they face” (*Vealey & Chase, 2008*).

***Comment:** this definition emphasizes the role of mindset in shaping athletic performance and achievement. This is also a definition that only functions in the world and lives of athletes. Too narrow.

Can we bring Mindset and Paradigm together?

Traditionally in psychology, a mindset and a paradigm are two distinct concepts, although they are often used interchangeably in a common language. A mindset refers to an individual's collection of beliefs and attitudes that shape their perception and interpretation of the world around them. Mindsets are often based on past experiences and can influence an individual's behavior and response to challenges and obstacles. For example, a person with a growth mindset believes that their abilities can be developed through effort and persistence, while a person with a fixed mindset believes that their abilities are innate and cannot be changed.

On the other hand, traditionally, a paradigm refers to a set of assumptions, concepts, and practices that constitute a particular way of viewing reality. A paradigm is a larger framework that shapes the way individuals in a field of study or profession think, act, and make decisions. For example, in psychology, the behaviorist paradigm emphasizes the importance of observable actions in shaping human experience and behavior, while the cognitive paradigm focuses on the role of mental processes in shaping human experience and behavior.

Overall, while both mindsets and paradigms are important concepts in psychology, they differ in their scope and focus.

Note for this publication

Again, this is too diverse and complex for an easy understanding of what we try to say when we use the words 'mindset' and 'paradigm'. In this publication, it is used to describe the same phenomenon. 'It is the framework that structures the way an individual understands a specific life theme, topic, theory or philosophy'.

Personality

Below is a list of the ten most used definitions of personality. It shows how the world of construct definitions in psychology differs in their understanding of the same word. Not the same construct – the same word. The author tried to comment on some of these definitions, but in most instances, the content is such that a comment is unnecessary. If a definition doesn't have a clear, concise, logical, and easy-to-understand structure, the author doesn't see the value of commenting. The author commented on some of these definitions but not on all. The reader must apply their own critical thinking as part of the learning process.

- ▶ “Personality refers to the unique set of characteristics and traits that make up an individual's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive patterns” (McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1999). *A five-factor theory of personality. Handbook of personality: Theory and research*, 2, 139-153).

***Comment:** I have no idea what this definition entails. The language is habit-style but the way in which the different constructs relate to each other is unclear.

- ▶ “Personality can be defined as the dynamic organization of an individual's psychological systems that determine their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in different situations” (Allport, G. W. (1961). *Pattern and growth in personality. Holt, Rinehart and Winston*).

***Comment:** this is not bad. The vague part is the understanding of ‘psychological systems’.

- ▶ “Personality is the sum total of an individual's biological, environmental, and social factors that shape their character, disposition, and temperament” (Cloninger, C. R. (1999). *The Temperament and Character Inventory–Revised. St. Louis, MO: Center for Psychobiology of Personality*).

***Comment:** too many undefined concepts: social factors, character, and temperament.

- “Personality is the relatively stable and enduring pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish one individual from another” (Funder, D. C. (2013). *The Personality Puzzle* (6th ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company).

***Comment:** there seems to be a serious challenge in the way this definition could be interpreted. According to this statement, personality is the combination of traits that distinguishes one person from the other. Does that mean that our patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are exclusively and individually unique? Or do we share some similarities? If we agree with the first interpretation, the definitions are a challenge because we do share some traits. If the latter is implicated, it means that the traits we share do not form part of personality? In that case, the traits we share depend on who we are measured against. That means that traits we share are not part of our personalities, and it depends on who we are compared to. What I like about this definition is that it takes a flexible approach. What I don't like is that my personality is then (in a way) defined by the personalities of those individuals with whom the comparison is made.

- “Personality is the underlying psychological structure that guides an individual's response to different situations, stimuli, and environments” McAdams, D. P. (1995). *What do we know when we know a person?* *Journal of Personality*, 63(3), 365-396).

***Comment:** the underlying psychological structures must be mentioned. This is too wide and vague.

- “Personality is the set of individual differences that influence how people perceive, interpret, and respond to the world around them” (Goldberg, L. R. (1993). *The structure of phenotypic personality traits*. *American Psychologist*, 48(1), 26-34).

***Comment:** the focus is on 'individual differences. This is good but it is vague. As with some of the above definitions, this is open to interpretation that makes clarity difficult to define. The key question is: what does Goldberg mean with '...the set of individual differences'?

- ▶ "Personality is the characteristic way in which an individual thinks, feels, and behaves across time and situations" (Mischel, W. (1968). *Personality and Assessment*. New York, NY: Wiley).
- ▶ "Personality can be defined as the internal psychological structure that determines how an individual adapts to their environment, copes with stress, and interacts with others" (Hogan, R. (1996). *A socioanalytic perspective on personality: The Five-Factor Model*. In M. H. Bornstein & M. E. Arterberry (Eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Behavior Genetics* (pp. 219-231). Springer).
- ▶ "Personality is the unique and relatively stable set of psychological characteristics and behaviors that differentiate one person from another" (Cervone, D., & Shoda, Y. (1999). *The coherence of personality: Social-cognitive bases of consistency, variability, and organization*. Guilford Press).
- ▶ "Personality can be described as the distinctive patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are typical of an individual and that distinguish them from others" (Pervin, L. A., Cervone, D., & John, O. P. (2005). *Personality: Theory and research* (9th ed.). Wiley).

Etymology of the Word 'Personality'

The word 'personality' has its roots in the Latin word 'persona', which refers to the mask worn by actors in ancient Greek and Roman theatre. Over time, 'persona' came to mean the role or character that an individual played in society and eventually evolved to mean an individual's distinctive characteristics and traits. The modern use of 'personality' emerged in the 18th

century when it was used to describe the sum total of an individual's qualities and characteristics. This is still vague.

The challenge is much more complex. What many authors and academics do, is they use vague words to define vague concepts. This an example: personality (a vague concept) is the total of the characteristics (another vague word), traits (another vague word), attitudes (more vague words) and thinking styles (another vague word) of a person. This is not helping the world of research. Definitions must be clean, easy, and clear.

Personality – in this publication – is the mask we portray, shaped by our habits and the context, as perceived by others.

Subconscious Mind

The concept of the subconscious mind has been, for many years, subject to criticism from various perspectives - including scientific, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. The author will not comment on these individual points because, in a way, these statements are mostly in agreement with the position of the author. The author makes a statement at the end of the list that should be regarded as the collective comment on this topic.

Some of the primary points of criticism against the idea of a subconscious mind are, amongst many others:

- ▶ Lack of empirical evidence. One of the most significant criticisms of the concept of a subconscious mind is the lack of empirical evidence to support it. Critics argue that the idea of a subconscious mind is based on anecdotal evidence and subjective experiences rather than scientific research. According to psychologist Richard J. McNally, "there is no scientific evidence that the mind is divided into conscious and unconscious parts" (McNally, 2003).
- ▶ Ambiguity of terminology. Critics argue that the term 'subconscious mind' is ambiguous and imprecise. It is not clear what exactly is meant by the

term, and different authors use it in different ways. Philosopher Colin McGinn, for example, argues that the concept of the subconscious mind is "a vague, ill-defined notion that does little more than give the impression of profundity without actually having any content" (McGinn, 1996).

- ▶ Lack of explanatory power. Another criticism of the concept of a subconscious mind is that it does not provide a satisfactory explanation for many of the phenomena it is supposed to account for. For example, the idea that unconscious mental processes can influence behavior and emotions is not new, but critics argue that the concept of a subconscious mind does not provide a clear and coherent account of how this happens. Philosopher Daniel Dennett has argued that "the idea of the subconscious mind is an obsolete and scientifically discredited theory of the mind" (Dennett, 1991).
- ▶ Potential for misinterpretation: the concept of a subconscious mind can also be misinterpreted and misused. Critics argue that the idea of a hidden, unconscious mind can be used to justify all sorts of beliefs and behaviors without any evidence to support them. For example, some proponents of the concept of a subconscious mind claim that it can be used to tap into hidden powers or abilities, which can lead to pseudoscientific and potentially harmful practices. (Dennett, 1991).

Comments by the author

While the concept of a subconscious mind remains popular in some circles, it has been subject to intense criticism from various angles. As indicated above, critics argue that the idea lacks empirical evidence, is imprecise and ambiguous, does not provide a satisfactory explanation for many phenomena, and can be misinterpreted and misused. All of it is without any sound scientific framework of research.

The primary point is that it functions as the classic 'hole in the cheese theory'. This is how it works. The hole in the cheese is there because there is nothing. We

give it a persona and a definition because we must find a way to explain what we cannot explain. It is the persona of a gap in the logical completeness of those components in our thinking that we just can't explain. My experience, when listening very carefully to those who prefer this hypothesis as true, is that the subconscious is used when behavior, dreams, and the things people say, cannot be explained. Then the subconscious becomes the hole in the cheese. The cheese being our understanding of things, and the hole being the gaps in our understanding.

Definitions of Mindfulness with References

- ▶ “Mindfulness refers to the practice of being present and fully engaged in the present moment, with a non-judgmental awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings.”

***Comment:** there is no such thing as a 'non-judgmental awareness'. If someone takes a 'non-judgmental' position, then to be non-judgmental is their judgment.

- ▶ “Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.”

***Comment:** 'calmly accepting' should not be seen as part of a state of mindfulness. In fact, mindfulness is mostly used when we do not calmly accept our feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

- ▶ “Mindfulness is a state of consciousness that involves paying attention to one's experiences in the present moment, without judgment or distraction, and with an attitude of curiosity and openness.”

***Comment:** Again the 'without judgment' is not possible – see the comment above.

- ▶ “Mindfulness involves intentionally bringing one's attention to the present moment, with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards one's thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations.”

***Comment:** Again the ‘without judgment’ is not possible – see the comment above.

- ▶ “Mindfulness is a state of being that involves cultivating awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, with the aim of fostering greater clarity, calmness, and well-being.”

***Comment:** This is too passive. It focuses on thoughts, emotions, and calmness. It should take the actions into account. What do you do; and not so much what do you feel.

Emotions

James-Lange Theory

Proposed by William James and Carl Lange, this theory suggests that emotions arise as a result of physiological responses in the body. According to this theory, we perceive a stimulus, which leads to specific bodily changes. These bodily changes then give rise to the experience of emotion. This is one of the better descriptions of emotion. It is simple to understand and easy to work with. But it has serious limitations. It doesn't account for emotions without external stimuli. It doesn't account for behavioral patterns of the subject that causes a negative emotional state despite all positive environmental stimuli.

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Cannon-Bard Theory

Developed by Walter Cannon and Philip Bard, this theory proposes that emotional experiences occur simultaneously with physiological responses. Unlike the James-Lange Theory, the Cannon-Bard Theory suggests that emotions and physiological reactions are independent but parallel processes that occur in response to a particular stimulus. This theory started with work of Cannon, and Bard took it further. There is a problem with their effort to dissect what causes emotional experiences. It seems like an oversimplification of the question about emotions with a slightly one-sided view of what emotions are and how it works.

Schachter-Singer Theory (Two-Factor Theory)

Proposed by Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer, this theory emphasizes the role of both physiological arousal and cognitive interpretation in the experience of emotion. This theory combines the above (James-Lange and Cannon-Bard). It suggests that emotions result from a combination of physiological arousal and the cognitive interpretation of that arousal based on situational cues and personal factors. The problem with this theory is that it remains to be vague. To turn it into a workable and practical framework of helping people in emotional distress is a challenge. It looks more like a philosophy than a workable recipe. (*Schachter & Singer (1962)*).

Facial Feedback Hypothesis

This hypothesis suggests that facial expressions play a crucial role in experiencing and interpreting emotions. According to this view, the physical act of forming facial expressions can influence emotional experiences. For example, if you smile, it can lead to increased feelings of happiness. This theory must be read as a valuable contribution to the way we think and understand emotions, but it is without doubt very limiting. (*Strack, Martin & Stepper – 1998*).

Evolutionary Theories

These theories are largely based on a view through the lens of survival, reproduction, and avoidance of danger. It is in line with the strategic perspective of human behavior within the broad framework of Darwin who did work on evolution and the way species survived. Evolutionary theories propose that emotions have evolved as adaptive responses to aid in survival and reproduction. Charles Darwin's theory of emotions highlights their adaptive functions, such as facilitating social interactions and responding to environmental threats or opportunities. This is a very narrow perspective on emotions and should be read within the context of the basis of survival that frames the theory. (Darwin, C. -1872). (Ekman, P. -1992).

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