

# Introduction

Since the first humans began interacting, there have always been those who wanted to influence others about choices in personal and daily life—how to lead, how to raise children, what to believe, and how best to live. They offered solutions about how to achieve these objectives all too often failed to deliver expected results. Today, advice givers abound, offering good or bad advice about how to manage our behavior, equipped with the amazing opportunity to distribute their words through books, the Internet, and social media. On a given day in the summer of 2016, Amazon listed 177,078 books on leadership, 14,000 on childrearing, and 58,482 about living a good life.

Making wise decisions today is complicated by the abundance of information readily available. People searching for answers may accept advice that confirms their biases without verifying the truth of that information. In examining medical studies in reputable journals, John P. Ioannidis, Professor of Medicine and Health Research at Stanford University, charges that as much as 90 percent of the published medical information that doctors rely on is flawed.<sup>1</sup> There is lots of advice about what to believe and how to live a good life,

make personal changes, and reach your potential that may be based on theory or desire, but not many clearly examined processes that you can trust to find what you need.

Underlying all the advice out there about our behavior is the *science* of behavior that provides principles to help us look objectively at how to maintain, suppress, or accelerate behavior. The principles in this book come from that particular methodology that has been replicated thousands of times through scholarly research. The principles provide reliable and valid results as to how people learn and under what conditions. With such a robust science-based technology to explore the ways in which behavior responds to the environment, the principles in this book are a surefire way to help you make thoughtful choices in changing the way your world works.

When you wake up tomorrow, your world will change—driverless cars, robots to clean our kitchens or do our jobs, or connections to vast areas of the world that were outside our reach in the past. While technology is changing fast in ways that make it easier to do almost everything, the way we learn and how habits are acquired and strengthened has not changed in thousands of years. It is time to understand those principles of learning: *everyone* needs these skills. In 1964, the folk songwriter, performer, and Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan, wrote, *The Times They are a-Changin'*, but he most likely did not anticipate the rate of change in our world today—and the unrelenting challenge of changing our behavior just to keep up. Knowing how to change in a way that benefits individuals and society is urgently needed. Most people have good and honorable intentions, but these intentions matter little if their actions do not achieve the desired result. This book will provide you with the methods to do just that. As you read, you will learn the essential principles

of how to change behavior while making this a wiser, and better, world.

If there had been public newspapers and a literate population to read them in the early days of ancient Rome, the headlines would probably not be distinguishable from those in the newspapers today. Stealing, bullying, and cheating were rampant. Water, air, and waste pollution, even traffic congestion, made everyday living difficult. People were seen as bad or good by nature. Property rights and personal security could never be taken for granted. Going to war was a common method of solving disputes. Few would say that substantial progress has been made in the last 2,000 years. These problems not only still exist, but they consume enormous resources and funds, not to mention the human suffering they cause. People are still seen as having great potential or very little based not on capability but bias about that potential. These problems all boil down to human behavior and how environmental conditions are used to either advance or limit what people can accomplish.

We begin with a true story to illustrate how biases about how much a person can learn—and a lack of scientific knowledge about behavior—limits the potential of others. We hope that by the end of the book you end up as optimistic as we are about how this robust science of human behavior can influence this world for the better.

# 1

## Life's a PIC/NIC®

### **The Past is Not Prologue**

We begin with a story of Junior Hall, a patient at the Georgia Regional Hospital of Atlanta, an inpatient mental-health facility. Although some patients had been hospitalized since birth, they received no visits and little or no treatment. Most of the care of these patients was related to feeding, bathing and grooming.

Determined to make a difference in patient treatment and outcomes, the superintendent instituted a system-wide behavioral technology program as an efficient way to develop behaviors needed when patients are released and returned to their families and communities. Although many had been hospitalized for over 20 years, patients suddenly began to do extraordinary things. Every day accomplishments were described as mini-miracles through the systematic application of this science-based technology. Patients who were thought to be chronically un-motivated were discharged within weeks, not years. Although the percentage of state-wide recidivism was in the high 70s, at Georgia Regional it was 9 percent in the first year and 11 percent in the second.

Junior was admitted to the Developmental Disabilities Unit. The diagnosis necessary for admission was *severely-*

*retarded, non-ambulatory, bed-fast.* Not only did the patients in this unit not walk, but many did not respond to their names, speak, feed, or dress themselves. Many were not toilet-trained. Jordi Waggoner, a clinician on the psychology staff, immediately saw the potential for using newly-introduced behavioral methods in treating such severely afflicted individuals. As a result of her work and skill, and with the help of the unit staff, 51 out of 60 residents were quickly taught basic self-help skills. Even so, because of their severe physical limitations, Nine residents, including Junior, were assumed to be incapable of learning. In addition to working with the staff to teach self-help skills, Jordi would also help feed the residents who were too physically handicapped to feed themselves. Although Junior's medical chart stated his IQ to be less than 20, Jordi became convinced that he had more capabilities than an IQ of less than 20 would predict. When the director asked her what she would like to do, she said, "Teach him to read." The director, while very skeptical, told her that if she had the time it was okay with him.

Junior's cerebral palsy had crippled him to the point that he spent the day in a crib in a fetal position. He had only two movements of his body. He could move one wrist and could move his head from side-to-side. He could not speak. Sometimes his crib would be placed so that he could watch television, not because the staff necessarily thought he would get anything from it, but because it seemed like the humane thing to do.

The result was that over the course of several months, Jordi taught Junior to read! He peaked out after mastering about 150 words during her initial work with him. He could read simple books and then answer multiple-choice questions by moving his wrist with a pointer jammed between

his fingers to indicate the correct choice. That summer, Jordi assigned an intern from a local university to continue the work. The student was able to increase Junior's vocabulary another 100 words. At this point employees on the unit began to speculate about just how smart Junior really was. Everyone who knew him was convinced that he was now functioning at only a very small part of his intellectual potential.

Trapped for 20 years by physical limitations and the perception that he couldn't learn, it was fortunate that Junior had Jordi to teach him. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we, and even better, if our children could have a Jordi in our lives to "see" their behavioral potential and arrange positive conditions so that they, too, might thrive? Her skill in helping Junior enter into a whole new world of possibilities came from what this science of behavior teaches about the unlimited potential of everyone and anyone.

## **Why Write This Book?**

Knowing how the laws of behavior have changed the world for the better through decades of successful applications in homes, schools, and national and international work settings, the authors have four intersecting reasons for writing this book.

1. The *first* reason is to describe a science-based method to address human behavior that produces outcomes that are measurable, lasting, and scalable, based on factual understanding of causation. A comprehensive science of behavior helps predict patterns of behavior and how conditions may affect future actions. We believe the more that everyone understands these universal principles, the more we all benefit.

This is the end of the preview of Chapter One.  
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