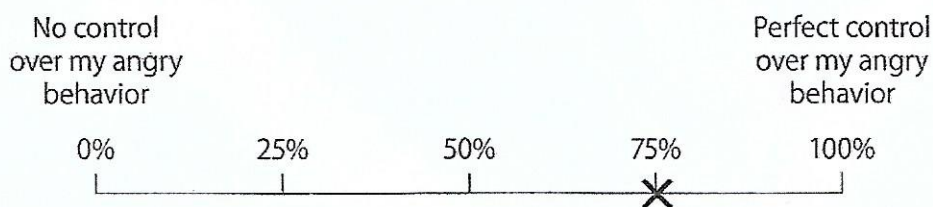


VIC: *Using scales to rate positive changes in behavior.*

Sometimes we can strengthen our new core beliefs more quickly if we practice new behaviors or make changes consistent with our new core beliefs. For example, Vic wanted to believe that he was acceptable, regardless of how well he did something. He noticed that he felt badly when he “failed” at something or didn’t do a task perfectly. It made sense to Vic that he should be able to feel acceptable about doing a task at work or home less than perfectly. However, he was not so sure he shouldn’t feel guilty and unacceptable whenever he exploded in anger at his wife, Judy. He did not want to behave in this way, and he knew that his anger was a problem, because his angry explosions were destructive to his marriage and his self-esteem. Vic knew that if he could positively change his angry behavior, he would begin to see himself as more acceptable. More importantly, he was certain that changing it would improve his relationship with Judy.

Vic set a goal to change his behavior when he was angry. He wanted to stay in control of his behavior and not use threatening behaviors or words. Instead, he wanted to stay connected with Judy and talk through disagreements in a respectful way. This meant that he wanted to listen more to Judy even when they disagreed, and also express his views assertively without putting her down. Because he tended to be perfectionistic, Vic learned to use rating scales to reduce his perfectionism. For example, his therapist taught Vic to rate his anger at work and at home on an “anger control” scale. The following scale shows how Vic rated his anger control in a conversation with Judy.



In the conversation, Vic became irritated and raised his voice several times. He even pounded the table with his fist once. But he did not criticize Judy, leave the house, or behave in any way she considered threatening. He stayed on topic and took one three-minute timeout to cool down when his anger started to feel out of control.

Before learning to rate his experiences, Vic would have judged the conversation as an anger control “failure,” because he was not perfectly in control all the time. Evaluating this experience as a “failure” would have discouraged Vic and perhaps added to his hopelessness about learning to control his angry behavior. Using the scale shifted Vic’s perspective. He was able to see that he was not a failure: He was 75% successful instead of 0% successful. Even though he was very angry, he did not explode, withdraw, or hurt Judy. He listened to what she had to say, and also talked to her about what was important to him. Even when his anger built up, he was able to return to the conversation after a three-minute timeout. For these reasons, he and Judy considered his efforts worthwhile, even though he showed less than perfect control. Recognizing his partial success showed Vic that he was making progress and helped him feel good about what he was doing well.

Rating your experiences on a scale may be equally helpful in your life. If you have changes you are trying to make, or experiences that you tend to discount or see as “failures” if they are not perfect, try rating them on a scale. See what difference it makes if you focus on the partial positive aspects of the experience, instead of looking solely at the negative aspects.

REMINDERS



Use a scale to rate experiences you tend to see in “all-or-nothing” or “success-or-failure” terms. Also use a scale to track your progress in changing a behavior or mood. Notice how it feels to look at the positive portion of the scale. Try to give yourself credit for any progress represented on the scale.

EXERCISE: Rating Behaviors on a Scale instead of in All-or-Nothing Terms

On Worksheet 12.8, identify some of your own behaviors related to your new core belief. For example, if you are trying to develop a new core belief that you are lovable, you might rate your social behavior or things you do that you think would make you lovable. If you are trying to develop a new core belief that "I am a worthwhile person," you could focus on behaviors that you think demonstrate your worth. Choose behaviors that you tend to evaluate in all-or-nothing terms. For each scale, describe the situation and write what behavior you are rating. Notice how it feels to rate your behavior on a scale instead of evaluating yourself in all-or-nothing terms. After you have rated several behaviors on these scales, summarize what you have learned at the bottom of Worksheet 12.8. For example, Vic wrote, "I am acceptable even when I have partial successes, because these are steps in the right direction. My efforts to improve myself are a sign of acceptability, even though I am less than perfect."

WORKSHEET 12.8. Rating Behaviors on a Scale

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Situation: _____ Behavior I am rating: _____
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Summary: