The choice point model: An introduction

From Ciarrochi, Bailey, and Harris, Out January 1, 2014

Penguin Publishers

What is a choice point?

A choice point is a moment in time when it is possible to choose between values-consistent and values inconsistent behavior.

People are often unaware of choice points, so a key first task of the practitioner is to help them become aware.

In Man’s search for meaning, Victor Frankl argued that even in the most restrictive circumstances, even if you are in a concentration camp facing death, you still have the chance to make valued choices.

“In between stimulus and response there is a space; in that space lies our power to choose our response; in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

-Victor Frankl
What is the choice point model

- The Choice Point is a simple way to help you and your client keep track of where you are in an ACT intervention.

- Indeed, we believe it is useful for just about any Contextual Behavioral Science intervention

- Let’s walk through the choice point model now

The choice point represents the present moment. At any given moment, we can choose to act in a value consistent or a value inconsistent way.

The top may also be labeled “unworkable” and “workable” and “Away” and “Towards.” Note that “Away” and “Toward” here does not necessarily mean aversive versus appetitive. It refers to value inconsistent versus consistent action. Some avoidance may be value consistent, and some appetitive behavior may be value inconsistent.
Now we add three things:

The situation. What is the challenging situation you are facing? This is the antecedent.

Inner experience. What difficult feelings, thoughts, and sensations show up in this situation?

Values, Skills, and Strengths: What can you use to help you respond effectively to inner experience and to the challenge.

Example choice point for client with diabetes.
Introducing the choice point

- The client is told that this is a mindful, collaborative activity. You are helping the client to step back and look at his or her own life.

- You show the client the worksheet and get informed consent.

- The therapist takes a mindful and exploratory stance. Only the client can determine what is value-consistent or inconsistent. Like all ACT interventions, the therapeutic stance is one of compassion and equality. We all have our difficult choice points.
Temptation to eat something that has a lot of sugar (High GI)

Value inconsistent
Moving away from the life outcome you want, acting ineffectively, behaving unlike the person you want to be

Value Consistent
Moving towards the life outcome you want, acting effectively, behaving like the person you want to be

Choice Point

Difficult feelings, thoughts, and sensations

Values you want to live by, and skills/strengths you can use

Challenging Situation

“I’m not feeling any symptoms, I’ll be ok. I’ve worked hard all day, I deserve this. It’s all too hard.”

Cravings for sugar

Temptation to eat something that has a lot of sugar (High GI)
A special note about the health domain

- When we use the choice point in the health domain, we often seek to help clients identify the desired outcomes of their health behavior.

- Then once they see the possible outcomes, we help them to identify how those outcomes will help their life in general, as in the forthcoming slide.

- We can’t always obtain the outcomes we want. We help people to recognize this, and use the choice point model to define success not in terms of outcome, but in terms of value-consistent behavior.

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**Choice Point**

**Difficult feelings, thoughts, and sensations**
- “I’m not feeling any symptoms, I’ll be ok. I’ve worked hard all day, I deserve this. It’s all too hard.”
- cravings for sugar

**Values you want to live by, and skills/strengths you can use**
- Desired health outcomes: having good immune function, having energy, thinking better, better physical functioning
- These help me to: painting, playing with grandkids, spending time with friends

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Temptation to eat something that has a lot of sugar (High GI)
The following is an example skill that can be used in the Choice Point

This is taken from *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life Teens*, By Ciarrochi, Hayes, and Bailey, 2012
AT the choice point, be BOLD

- **B**- Breath—Breath slowly, slow down
- **L**- Listen to values—Right now, what kind of person do you want to be?
- **D** – Decide on actions and do them. Choose actions that will reflect your values

What skills and strengths can you use to help live your values?

- You can state skills in terms of if-then statements. Here are some examples
  - If _____________________(difficult feelings) shows up, then I will use my BOLD skills, let the feelings come and go like weather, and choose my “value consistent” action
  - If _____________________(reason for not doing things) shows up, then I will use my BOLD skills and “never mind my mind.”
  - If _____________________(external difficulty) comes up, then I will take the following steps to deal with the difficulty (use problem solving and write action plan here)
Using Choice Point flexibly

- We have given you a demonstration of working through the choice point quickly with a client. You can also use it for more detailed work.

- The following diagrams show you how to use Choice Point when working with avoidance, willingness, defusion, self-compassion, and values

- We use Toward and Away in these diagrams but again this refers to value consistent and inconsistent behavior, not appetitive and aversive driven behavior.
Am I willing to have these feelings, in order to move “toward” what I want?

If yes, then allow feelings to come and go like weather, breath in and around them, make space for them.
I can't do it, it's too hard
I'm not good enough
I don't deserve it
My body is ugly
What if I fail?
I don't have the motivation

Step back and observe your thoughts. Write them down. Play with them.

Never mind your mind if it does not help you. Carry your mind and your thoughts as you move in valued way.

Self-compassion

What's wrong with me
I always fail
I'm weak
I'll never lose weight

• Choosing self-kindness as a value and finding ways to put that value into play
• Recognizing that all people fail at their goals
• Making space for the self-criticism
• Recommitting to values
Free stuff
TheWeightEscape.com
Acceptandchange.com

Available January 2014!
Penguin Publishers

THE WEIGHT ESCAPE
Stop fad dieting, start losing weight and reshape your life using cutting-edge psychology

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