

## **Eliminating Self-Defeating Behaviors Workshop\*- Session One**

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### **What the Workshop Does:**

This workshop is designed to provide participants with information and techniques to eliminate or minimize behaviors which are self-defeating; behaviors that keep life more difficult than it needs to be.

### **What to Expect:**

All participants are invited to choose something about themselves they wish to change or eliminate. They are not required to disclose it to other class members although some do because they find feedback from others helpful. In fact, the more open and transparent we are in class, the better everyone's experience will be. While class members are not required to be open with the group they do need to share their specific self-defeating behaviors with Dr. Coombs to receive maximum help. This is done by emailing your homework assignments to [DrDavidCoombs@gmail.com](mailto:DrDavidCoombs@gmail.com) at least two days before we meet again. Your confidentiality is maintained. You remain anonymous. But I encourage you to be as open and transparent in your homework as you possibly can be. I will explain what your homework entails at the end this lesson.

### **What are examples of self-defeating behaviors:**

1. Low self-esteem
2. Procrastination
3. Fear of failure
4. Fear of groups
5. Difficulty making decisions
6. Addictive behaviors
7. Perfectionism
8. Anger, bad temper, feelings of hatred
9. Compulsive, obsessive behaviors
10. Excessive worry
11. Situational depression
12. Dealing with the loss of loved ones through death or divorce
13. Despair, loneliness, feeling life is meaningless
14. Excessive guilt and difficulty forgiving self and/or others
15. Inability to say "no." Excessive need to please others
16. Procrastination
17. Inability to give of oneself in a loving relationship
18. Quitting in the midst of difficult tasks
19. Overweight caused by over eating
20. Etc.

The first step to change is identifying the specific behavior you do that is interfering with your being completely satisfied with your life. Choose one difficult and challenging behavior you want to eliminate, so you will be highly motivated to work hard in this workshop. Making changes is often difficult. For many, the task seems too great and too formidable to even start. This workshop is designed to assist you in a step-by-step method to rid yourself of a behavior that **you do or that you feel** hinders your progress.

### **Defeating the Workshop**

Although people willingly volunteer to enroll in a Self-Defeating Behavior Workshop (SDB), sometime during the program, most people try to defeat it in an attempt to keep their behavior going. One way people try to defeat the program is by using the SDB they chose to change. For example, if you came here to change procrastination, you undoubtedly will procrastinate in the workshop and defeat yourself. If you came here to change feelings of inferiority, you probably will create inferior feelings here. If you depress yourself often, you could do that in the workshop. If you use blaming to keep your SDB, you can blame the workshop and/or the instructor for being ineffective.

Look at the list below and share how you might be tempted to use one of these behaviors to defeat yourself. It not only helps you if you will be open about it in class, but it helps others as well. Not being willing to share how you might defeat the workshop is a method you could use to prevent change. By getting the method out in the open, you will have a chance to see it in a new light and receive data about yourself you didn't have before, and this will help you be less resistant to change.

Read through the list and check all those ways you might try to prevent change. As you recognize them make a decision now to not let anything get in the way to achieving your goal.

1. Withhold important data that is needed to bring about change.
2. Put responsibility for change entirely on others.
3. Be non-committal to the change program.
4. Do not fulfill the assignments given in the workshop.
5. Realize something must change, but choose not to do it.
6. Use various means of defeating the change program as a way of legitimately feeling discouraged and giving up.
7. Be inattentive: for example take or send text messages. By the way, if you haven't done so, please turn off your cell phones now and don't use them during the workshop.
8. Refuse to risk being known by avoiding to acknowledge anxiety laden data inside yourself.
9. Maintain that change is impossible.
10. Believe that something worse will happen if the SDB is given up.
11. Talk about various subjects in the workshop (which may be of real interest) but that are irrelevant to the change process and are used to avoid focusing on your SDB.
12. Approach the workshop with the notion that what you learn will be applied in your later life and do nothing now to change.
13. Imagine that the time needed to change will inconvenience others.
14. Focus on others as a way to avoid looking at yourself.
15. Pray for divine help to change but don't put forth the effort needed to change.
16. Be an observer rather than a full participant.
17. Acknowledge that you are already over-loaded and you don't have time to spend on this program but enrolled anyway. What will you give up to allow time to be successful in eliminating your SDB?

Although all of you in this workshop sincerely want to let your self-defeating behaviors go, please understand most people fear change. It is human nature. Nevertheless, please commit yourself to do all you can to work through your doubts and fears, and take the risk necessary to do what you need to do to achieve a full behavior change. This course can change your life for the better, and you have nothing to lose but your SDB.

### **Owning Your Self-Defeating Behavior**

As you do your SDB, you are your own worst enemy! You are altogether, all the way, completely the doer of your self-defeating behavior. It is impossible for you to carry an SDB from one moment in your life to a future moment without your actively doing it. You must make it happen.

You must take ownership of this behavior. You may think that you understand what is written above, but few people do. May I suggest that as you continue to do your SDB, you really do not understand the prices you are paying to keep it. Because when you understand, really understand, that you are the doer of your SDB and no one else is forcing you to use it and that you do use your agency to do this behavior, you will drop your SDB.

Self-defeating behavior is not something you are, but something you do. The SDB is a behavior you have learned. It was learned at a time of conflict, stress, anxiety, fear, loneliness, hostility, etc., when just reacting naturally didn't bring satisfactory results.

Your SDB, then, is simply a way of coping with the world--a way of responding or acting that maybe was needed at the moment of crises but is not effective now, and therefore, is a hindrance to learning better responses and to enjoying a more complete life. Consequently, an SDB is not a condition or a sickness but is a behavior that you do.

Life continues to offer you new moments of living. Those moments can be filled with self-defeating or with creative actions. If you desire the creative route, you need to begin by doing three things as part of this lesson #1.

**First**, identify exactly how you do your SDB. You must dig deeper to find out the feelings, thoughts, and physical actions which trigger your SDB. Two examples are: 1. A workshop participant working to eliminate weight identified 35 ways she got food into her mouth, how she stirred it, where she did most of her eating, at what time she ate, and how she felt, and her thoughts as she ate. 2. Another participant, working to drop his SDB of feeling socially inadequate, identified the thoughts, feelings, and

circumstances he used to do his feelings of social inadequacy. He said, "I convince myself by my thoughts and feelings, that if I don't impress certain key people (anyone whom I decide to impress), then I'm just not very adequate."

**Second**, discover how you disown your SDB. All people who do SDBs have ways to disown that they do. That is, we put responsibility for our behavior off ourselves and onto someone or something else. Examples are:

1. Believe your behavior is automatic. It just happened.
2. Think it is all habit.
3. Think you've inherited it.
4. Believe you are just a little different from other people.
5. Split yourself into a good and a bad half.
6. Blame self, family, environment, church, government:  
    "My mother/father ruined me".  
    "My family is no good."  
    "That is the way it's always been."  
    "**They** made me do it that way."

The following are statements that workshop participants have made. These should help you identify some of the ways you disown your SDB.

1. He put me down, and he gave me an inferiority complex. It's his fault I feel inferior.
2. I can't control my feelings. Therefore, I can't be held responsible.
3. My SDB is an automatic reflex. It just happens--I can't help it.
4. That's just the way I am. (A good excuse to continue doing your SDB.)
5. I get relapses. (Instead of owning up to what you do to make a relapse happen.)
6. In social situations I become tense. (To say, "I become tense" as though it just happened is to blame the situation for your tension. Identify your thoughts that created the tension.)
7. I find myself depressed. (Without owning up to what I do to get myself depressed.)
8. Something won't let me do what I want. (A mysterious power renders me helpless.)
9. I just lost my concentration. (Instead of owning up to what you were doing or thinking that distracted you and caused you to lose your concentration.)
10. Then I began to worry out of thin air. (It just happened--I didn't have anything to do with it.)
11. I would like to drop my anxiety. (Instead of realizing the anxiety is created. If anxiety wasn't created it wouldn't have to be dropped.)
12. It got so bad in the group I had to leave. (Blame the anxiety on the group.)
13. My SDB has happened a few times. (Sort of saying it just happened instead of admitting what was done to bring it about.)
14. The devil made me do it. (It's not my fault.)
15. It's God's wish. (It wasn't me that wanted to do it.)
16. It's my parents' fault. (They made me who I am.)
17. I always work best under pressure. (Therefore my procrastination is a good thing.)

**Third**, talk about yourself as **the doer** of your self-defeating behavior.

Examples that show how you really are the doer of your SDB:

1. "I do a fat making behavior."
2. "I do an inferiority feeling."
3. "I do a fear."
4. "I do my depression."
5. Etc.

### **Homework**

Email me [DrDavidCoombs@gmail.com](mailto:DrDavidCoombs@gmail.com)\* your home work at least two days before we meet again: it should consist of the following:

Discuss or list exactly how you do your SDB, that is, your thoughts, mental images, physical actions, etc., which trigger your SDB. Discuss how you disown your SDB, that is, who or what do you blame for your SDB. Add any other things you may want to write that you feel are connected to your struggle to drop your SDB.

You do not have to identify yourself. You may remain anonymous. But it would be to your advantage to be as open and transparent as you can be. Be Bold. Be Brave. Be Real!

\*Material for this workshop originated with Dr. Milton R. Cudney, Western State University, Kalamazoo, Michigan (1970). Permission was granted to duplicate and alter as needed. Revisions and alterations were made by Jonathan Chamberlain, BYU Personal Development Center (Revised November 1, 1973) Dr. Chamberlain authorized Dr. Coombs to use it in research for his doctoral dissertation. He was given permission to adopt, to revise, and to use it in subsequent workshops. A debt of gratitude is owed to Marva J. Coombs, M.A. for her editing the handouts used in this workshop.)