



## Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom

By William Glasser M.D.

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**Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom** By William Glasser M.D.

Dr. William Glasser offers a new psychology that, if practiced, could reverse our widespread inability to get along with one another, an inability that is the source of almost all unhappiness.

For progress in human relationships, he explains that we must give up the punishing, relationship-destroying external control psychology. For example, if you are in an unhappy relationship right now, he proposes that one or both of you could be using external control psychology on the other. He goes further. And suggests that misery is always related to a current unsatisfying relationship. Contrary to what you may believe, your troubles are always now, never in the past. No one can change what happened yesterday.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Southern California psychiatrist William Glasser, the author of *Reality Therapy*, believes that almost all human misery is caused by people trying to control others. In fact, he says, the only behavior we can control is our own; by the same token, no one can make us do anything we don't want to. It's only when we give up spending our energy trying to force others to conform to our ideas or to keep them from doing the same to us that we are able to live the way we want to. Glasser makes this somewhat difficult material easier to understand with examples and case studies from his own practice. For instance, he tells a man whose wife has left him that his only choices are to change what he wants her to do or to change the way he is dealing with her. While doing these things will not necessarily bring his wife back, Glasser says, it will certainly make him feel better. "When we actually begin to realize that we can control only our own behavior, we immediately start to redefine our personal freedom and find, in many instances, that we have much more freedom than we realize," Glasser writes.

#### From [Booklist](#)

Glasser has worked with choice theory for half of his 40 years of psychiatric practice. Basically, choice theory helps its users avoid confrontation and ask pertinent questions. It sees conscious or unconscious desire for external control as the main problem in the four major personal relationships: husband-wife, parent-child, teacher-student, and manager-worker. If you think you can control others, it counsels, you are in for trouble, for the only person you can control is yourself. So all personal problems are both present problems and relationship problems. Glasser urges anyone in a relationship to ask, before taking a step, whether that step will keep the two related persons at least as close together as they are now; if it will, it may be worth taking. Combining choice theory and reality therapy in his practice, Glasser has been able to shorten the durations of his treatment programs substantially. As he presents them here, his theories and approaches can be applied in education and business as well as for self-help. *William Beatty*

#### From Kirkus Reviews

Feeling really blue lately? Sweeping aside decades of research on brain chemistry, Glasser concludes that you're not depressed; rather, you're choosing ``to depress.'' Much-published psychiatrist Glasser (*Stations of the Mind: New Directions for Reality Therapy*, 1981, etc.) believes that choices about human relationships are at the heart of almost all psychological problems and that what governs such interactions is ``external control psychology.'' In other words, people generally try to coerce or manipulate others to achieve their goals. One of the more dubious tenets of his worldview is that most individuals believe ``it is right, it is even my moral obligation, to ridicule, threaten, or punish those who don't do what I tell them to do.'' Today, the author posits, relationships at home, work, and school should be characterized by a total absence of effort to control or even judge, that the focus should be on improving the relationship alone. This makes for an ultra-laissez-faire approach to much human interaction. For example, Glasser argues that failing students is inherently ``abusive,'' that a student who can't understand Shakespeare should be switched to James Herriot instead. Whatever happened to innovative approaches to learning, to teaching young people to persevere when facing difficulties? Granted, Glasser's pragmatic approach, which is elaborated in only the most general terms, may sometimes be more helpful than much psychoanalytically informed psychotherapy. In general, however, this is a grating book, for the author makes grandiose claims on behalf of his one-dimensional theory (which happens not to be terribly new at all). And Glasser relentlessly touts choice theory, even envisioning, in a community he's trying to transform, ``homeless people getting together for dinner and a discussion of [this] book.'' Wouldn't it be better if the townspeople, and the country, chose

instead to deal with the roots of homelessness? -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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