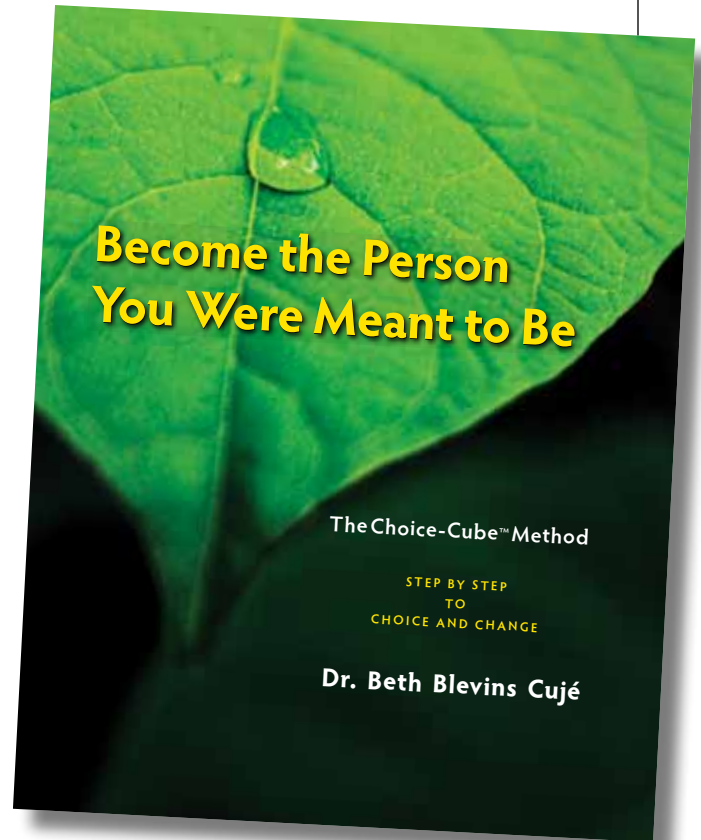


**WELCOME TO THE
CHOICE-CUBE METHOD.**

Here is a free sample of
Chapter One.



CHAPTER 1: SHADOW-AVOIDING & SHADOW-CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS

WE'RE BORN WANTING to avoid pain and go for pleasure. Nobody wants to feel bad. So when we are hurt, it's only human to want to protect ourselves from further pain. If we hurt an arm, we'll do everything we can to protect that arm. It's the same with emotions. If we have been wounded emotionally, we do not want to go back and feel those painful emotions again. Trying to avoid or control anything that might hurt us again is natural. But *inappropriately* trying to avoid or control things can put us in the shadows (see Chapters 2 and 3) and keep us there.

To some degree, life experiences have programmed all of us with inappropriate ways to avoid and control ourselves, people, our problems, or life's circumstances. We all know people who blow up at the smallest contradiction to avoid appearing wrong. We ourselves may be people-pleasers, trying to avoid rejection. Some people use pornography to feel powerful and in control. Then there are "super-spiritual" people who try to control life by denying parts of reality, or who try to control others by quoting the Bible. Others try to avoid and control aspects of their lives by refusing to feel anything. Examples are endless.

Of course, trying to avoid or control things is not always bad. But using inappropriate strategies and behaviors to defend ourselves can become habitual. And since what is habitual gradually becomes unconscious, we can become mindlessly stuck doing the same unhelpful things over and over. Trying to avoid or control our situation to protect ourselves in the moment can end up hurting us in the long run. However, by learning to recognize what we're doing, we can learn to resist

using inappropriate behaviors that bring short-term relief but end up as long-term pain.

AVOID

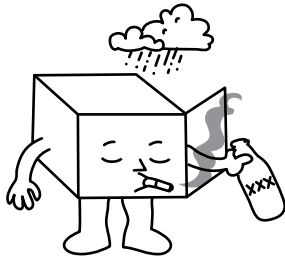
To illustrate ways we avoid painful circumstances, imagine that a friend has insulted you at a party in front of a number of your other friends. You might try to avoid feeling hurt or the unpleasant possibility of having to confront your friend in one of the following ways:

1. Have a few beers to smooth things over (*escape*).
2. Focus on getting another friend to feel your hurt instead of dealing with it yourself (*dump/vent*).
3. Swallow your hurt and "forget" that it ever happened (*stuff it*).
4. Nurse your hurt feelings, going over and over what happened in your mind, but doing nothing constructive about it (*submit helplessly*).

Are you in the habit of trying to avoid troubling thoughts, feelings, and problems? Have you learned to *escape* them through work, drugs, over-eating, or not eating, and the like? Perhaps you *dump/vent* your feelings to another person until you feel relief, though nothing has been resolved. Then you may feel better for a while, but the "dumpee" goes away feeling awful.

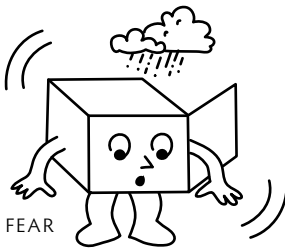
You may have learned early in life to *stuff* (repress or deny) your thoughts and feelings because nobody cared what you felt. Or perhaps it was dangerous to have feelings. You may even have learned to *submit helplessly* to bad thoughts and feelings and now wallow around in them,

FOUR SHADOW-AVOIDING BEHAVIORS



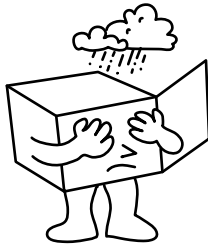
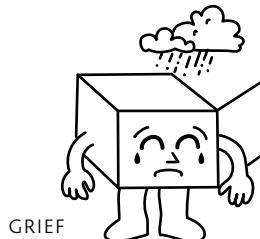
ESCAPE

You seek relief by distracting yourself with people, things, and processes that change your **BODY** chemistry. Often this leads to addictions. You use drugs, sexual arousal, shopping, eating, and so on to find relief and temporarily avoid dealing with issues and feeling discomfort.



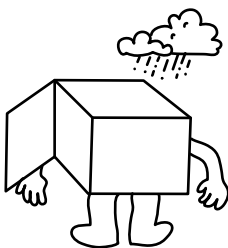
DUMP/VENT

You seek relief by shoving onto others the **EMOTIONS** that have built up that you cannot handle. You feel some relief but the other person feels terrible.



REPRESS/'STUFF IT'

You seek relief by automatically and unconsciously hiding from **THOUGHTS** and **MENTAL PICTURES** that threaten you or intensely arouse you. You resort to mechanisms like isolation, denial, projection, and rationalization. You may appear to be in control and have it together, but you are missing parts of the truth.



SUBMIT HELPLESSLY

You find relief in the helplessness, familiarity, and predictability of feeling overwhelmed. Freedom to direct your responses diminishes, and your **WILL** seems paralyzed. You believe you are unable to control or change yourself or the situation. You form an allegiance with the psychological pain and helplessly wallow in it. It can even become part of your identity.

stuck and paralyzed, unable to get to the lies that drive them or make lasting changes. This book will show you that you do not have to stay stuck. You have choice. You can learn to face your thoughts, feelings, and desires, *cross the bridge*, and resolve problems with honesty and compassion.

CONTROL

Another way we get stuck is by seeking to inappropriately control problems, thoughts, and feelings by trying to *fix, fight, or figure things out*.

Fix: When we get stuck trying to *fix* things in

order to gain control, we focus on the problem and lose our vision for change. We try harder and harder, doing the same things over and over, with no favorable results. Or we narrow our focus to getting what we want, regardless of the cost, and fail to get down to the real issues causing the problem. Take Barbara, for example:

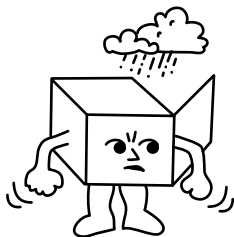
Barbara feels lonely all the time. She works hard at meeting new people. She has joined a dating service and goes to various singles groups, hoping to connect with someone. She has made some other changes, but she is not facing unfinished business from her childhood, including feelings of rejection and abandonment, and so she never gets to the roots of her loneliness.

Her efforts remain superficial and she seems unable to work through why she feels so isolated. Until Barbara gets to her deeper issues it's unlikely that she will make lasting changes.

Fight: When we try to gain a sense of control by *fighting*, we focus on negative thoughts and feel angry and resentful. This can create the illusion of control. It also keeps us stuck judging and blaming ourselves, others, or God. Here's Joe:

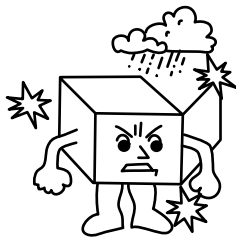
Joe's marriage is failing. He tries to control his problems by fighting. He is stuck judging, criticizing, and blaming *others*—including God—for the state of his

THREE SHADOW-CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS



FIX

You do more. You work longer and harder to try to fix the problem, person, or addiction. The harder you try, the more you stay stuck in the same place. Nothing changes!



FIGHT

You focus on the problem and criticize and rage at others, yourself, or even at God. You seem unable to take positive action. Instead you act compulsively, impulsively, or feel paralyzed.



FIGURE THINGS OUT

You get stuck on a mental merry-go-round seeking answers from your mind—and are confused and paralyzed because your mind is actually causing your problem.

marriage, but he takes no constructive action. He blames himself as well, but his only response in this area too is to criticize *himself*. At other times he feels sorry for himself because things are not getting better as fast as he would like. Joe's constant swinging between victimizing others and making himself the victim interferes with effective problem-solving, and undermines lasting constructive change.

Figure Things Out: It is important to reflect on our life and learn, but after a certain point, endlessly trying to *figure things out* as a way to feel in control stops making sense. For a number of reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 5, it doesn't make sense to seek answers from our mind when warped thinking is contributing to or even causing the problem. For example:

Tim is always trying to understand why he can't find a job. He's on a mental merry-go-round and can't seem to get off. His constant efforts to get to the bottom of his issues keep him focused on the problem instead of looking for a solution. He doesn't realize it, but his

endless analysis is wearing him out and *interfering* with solving his problem.

One great benefit of using the Choice-Cube Method is that we learn to recognize when we are in the shadows using avoiding and control behaviors. Then we can train ourselves to do something different. Instead of going on auto-pilot, we can *cross the bridge!* What would change in our life if we could stay clear about reality and choose how we want to respond in the moment instead of automatically using avoid-and-control strategies in an effort to protect ourselves?

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Take the questionnaire on the next page about avoid-and-control behaviors to see what you might be doing. If you find that you use those behaviors, do not worry. That's what this book is about: learning to *cross the bridge* from shadow to light instead of getting stuck in those behaviors. The next chapter focuses on what is meant by *shadow* and *light*. ☘

QUESTIONNAIRE KEY

Fill out the questionnaire on the following page.
Then, in the table below, circle the numbers you marked Often or Usually.
The higher your score, the more likely you are to use that behavior.

AVOID				CONTROL		
Escape	Dump/Vent	Repress/Stuff	Submit	Fix	Fight	Figure it out
2	5	4	1	11	10	3
16	8	7	6	17	15	14
		9	13			
		12				

QUESTIONNAIRE: DO YOU USE AVOIDING AND CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS?

Circle your responses to the following questions, then refer to the key on page 6.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. When you feel bad (anxious, hurt, lonely, confused, angry) do you accept it as familiar and wallow in it? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 2. When you feel bad, do you want to eat, drink, gamble, shop, watch TV, or otherwise get so busy you can't think? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 3. When you feel bad, do you get stuck trying to figure out why? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 4. When you feel bad, do you do anything you can think of to distract yourself and just move on? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 5. When you feel bad, do you talk about your fear, anger, and grief until those around you feel bad, too? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 6. When you feel bad, do you often feel so worn out that doing anything about it seems like too much work? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 7. When you allow people to take advantage of you, do you tell yourself that you are a good and kind person? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 8. When you feel bad, do you blame others and let them know that it's all their fault? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 9. When you feel bad, do you ignore it and find yourself irritated and resentful, not really knowing why? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 10. When you feel bad, do you automatically look for someone other than yourself to blame? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 11. When you feel bad, do you often try harder and harder to fix things but nothing seems to change? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 12. When you feel bad, does something usually go wrong with your body? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 13. When you feel bad, do you automatically blame yourself? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 14. When you feel bad, do you get on a mental merry-go-round trying to figure things out with little success? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 15. When you feel bad, do you work yourself up so that all you feel is anger toward others, yourself, or God? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 16. When you feel bad, do you act out sexually or get caught up in sexual fantasies or pornography? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |
| 17. When you feel bad, do you pray and pray, but never find peace? | Never–Rarely–Sometimes–Often–Usually |

**WE PROGRAM OURSELVES
WITH EVERY CHOICE
WE MAKE.**

This book helps us understand our selves
and our choices.

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The rest of the book offers
a workable solution
to help you make healthy choices
and become the person you were meant
to be.

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