



A Model for Learning to Understand and Communicate the Philosophy of Chiropractic: Using the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

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ABSTRACT

Background: From the beginning, communicating the philosophy of chiropractic has created turmoil within the profession, caused debate over its practicality, and sometimes been discarded as useless. A search began for a model to create avenues of understanding and communication. Other professionals have used Covey's 7 Habits as a model for success in communicating their principles and we felt that the chiropractic profession could make similar attempts. We selected Steven R. Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* for its concepts and applied them to strategies for use by chiropractic educators or philosophy instructors.

Discussion: This paper describes a new model of communication by synthesizing the 7 Habits of Covey with the works of Stephenson in the *Chiropractic Textbook*. This model uses principled perceptions to illustrate a philosophical value for clinical practice and educational experience, so it can be more easily heard and understood by a wider audience.

Conclusion: The authors believe that the philosophy of chiropractic is as vital to the profession as is the science and the art. The authors suggest that using Covey's 7 Habits as a model is useful, practical, and worthy for doctors of chiropractic to consider as another avenue for dialogue, advancing the philosophy of chiropractic, and serving as a platform for learning to better understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic. (*J Chiropr Humanit* 2005;12:38-44)

Key Indexing Terms: Chiropractic; Philosophy; Communication; Models, Educational

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the chiropractic profession, understanding and communicating the philosophy of

chiropractic created turmoil within the profession. It has caused debate, been accused of being religious in nature, and, for some, has been discarded as useless and/or harmful to the chiropractic profession. With these issues in mind, an investigation was initiated to explore models to develop and expand the dialogue on the philosophy of chiropractic. During this search Steven R. Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was uncovered.¹ This book presents a model for learning habits to solve

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personal and professional problems, and inspired the authors to take these basic ideas and apply them so the chiropractic educator may use them in philosophy courses, or to integrate the philosophy of chiropractic into other curricular courses.

While each individual may have a perception, belief, or theory of what the philosophy of chiropractic should be, some of the differences could be attributed to a lack of understanding of what the philosophy of chiropractic was meant to be, how it was to be used, or could be used, in the process of educating our students, faculty, and patients in our college clinics. Our perceptions are formed by our experiences and guide the way we see things; the way we see things then dictates our behaviors. The Pygmalion theory, or expectancy theory, states that what we expect is what we will get.

In learning to understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic, we must be able to look at the lens through which we are viewing the past writings of this philosophy, for this is how we interpret what we see and thus directs our actions. We must be able to understand our own paradigms, or the way we see things, through perception, understanding, and interpretation. Then, through a better understanding, create communication based on deductive reasoning instead of viewing things only as we think they are or as we think they should be.

Albert Einstein observed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” With many perceptions of what the philosophy of chiropractic is, or if it should even be a part of the practice of chiropractic, this paper attempts to create a model for learning to understand and

communicate the philosophy of chiropractic using Steven Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.¹ This tool could be utilized in creating principled perceptions, or creating a paradigm shift, for the chiropractic student that illustrates the value of the philosophy of chiropractic for clinical practice and one that may add to their educational experience.

DISCUSSION

In order for perceptions to create desired behaviors, they must become habits. Covey defined a habit in these terms:¹ “A habit is the intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire. Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the what to do and the why. Skill is the how to do. And desire is the motivation, the want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three.”

R.W. Stephenson states in his *Chiropractic Textbook*,² “The difference between a good chiropractor and a poor one is that the good one has an ample supply of abstract principles in his head, and the poor one only a few.” Perhaps a synthesis of the habits of Steven Covey’s book with the principles of R.W. Stephenson’s book could provide an ample supply of abstract principles for today’s chiropractor.

Today’s chiropractic educator or practicing chiropractor may wish to consider the following habits as a model for learning to understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic in order to more effectively educate students and patients.

The 7 Habits Model

Habit #1 Be Proactive

This habit is determined by conditioning and conditions much like Pavlov’s well known experiments with dogs; the stimulus/response theory. According to

Covey, the nature or determination of man could be explained by three theories: genetic determinism, psychic determinism, or environmental determinism. Basically, these theories share the common theme that we are conditioned to respond in a certain way to a given stimulus. One has awareness and can produce a response when given the chance to select. When we are confronted with this opportunity, it is the stimulus to pick or choose that will create a response from the stimulus, but somewhere in between is a gap. This gap or space could be the key to our function, behavior, health status or how innate intelligence is personified. The action that occurs in this gap could be the fundamental element in how we adapt to the internal and external environment, how we maintain homeostasis, or if the appropriate message gets from the brain cell to the tissue cell and back again.

According to principle 30 in the *Chiropractic Textbook*,² “Interference with the transmission of Innate forces causes incoordination or dis-ease.” This interference may cause obstruction with the message, or mental impulse, being sent from the brain cell to tissue cell and from the tissue cell to the brain. If there is interference, the body may not be able to interpret the stimulus correctly therefore changing what occurs in the gap between the stimulus and response. If that message or stimulus is interpreted incorrectly, incoordination, dis-ease or ill health and misdirected responses and behaviors could be the result.

Habit #2 Begin with the End in Mind

Habit 2 is based on the principle,¹ “...that all things are created twice; there is the mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things.” To begin with the end in mind is to create such a vivid picture or paradigm so that one can use it as criteria for

a frame of reference to which everything else is examined; if one starts with a flawed premise, a valid conclusion cannot be reached. The simple cycle described in Stephenson’s text may clarify this best.² “Creation, transmission and expression make one-half of the cycle.” This begins in the brain and is only mental or abstract. Stephenson states,² “Transmission of currents takes place along the path of efferent nerve fibers, and expression is at the nerve periphery.” These actions become physical through personification. His text continues,² “As the physical medium for the remaining half of the circuit, we find afferent nerves connecting tissue cell and brain. This half (the afferent half) of the cycle is made up of three divisions, impression, transmission and interpretation.” Thus, the physical stimulus causes another response and the beginning of another cycle.

In chiropractic, this picture or paradigm starts with principle 1, called the Major Premise, which states,² “A universal intelligence is in all matter and continually gives to it all its properties and actions, thus maintaining it in existence.” Whatever belief system or philosophy one has, whether it is evolution or creation, it is proposed that some event occurred that created our existence. This also created the existence where universal and innate intelligence reside, but this belongs to a different discussion and should be kept separate and distinct from discussion of the philosophy of chiropractic. Through understanding the Major Premise, we propose that one can understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic in a more effective manner.

Habit #3 Put First Things First

This habit has been equated to being principle-centered or living the program. There must be an ongoing dialogue and process of keeping your vision and values

before you; align your life with your principles and be congruent – understand and communicate. Stephenson’s text states:² “The Educated Brain is used by Innate to receive precepts concerning the environment of the body, obtained by her able scouts, the Five Senses.” We must increase our knowledge by utilizing our senses and exercising our mental capacities to be involved with continued learning to understand. Learning to understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic, putting first things first to us means studying and understanding the 33 principles written by Stephenson in the *Chiropractic Textbook*. These principles may help us to align our paradigms and guide our behaviors in communicating and practicing chiropractic. They provide the foundation upon which we may build ethical guidelines in understanding and communicating the philosophy of chiropractic.

Habit #4 Think Win-Win

Habit 4 is a frame of mind and heart that seeks mutual benefit and is based on mutual respect in all interactions. Stephenson states,² “The function of innate intelligence is to adapt universal forces and matter for use in the body, so that all parts of the body will have co-coordinated action for mutual benefit.”

Everyone has a philosophy whether it is identifiable or not, and that philosophy is their view of the world and their relationship with others. Covey states that the win-win concept is,¹ “... based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person’s success is not achieved at the exclusion of the success of others.” Thus, two people can see things very differently, but both may be right. It is recommended that we continually review our paradigms and assumptions, and the process by which they are developed.

The *Chiropractic Textbook* gives us a starting point to begin questioning our paradigms and beliefs about the philosophy of chiropractic. Our effectiveness as chiropractors is governed by the foundation we build utilizing philosophical principles and we may become more effective as we understand and apply the principles of chiropractic.

Habit #5 Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood

This means to “listen with the intent to understand others, rather than with the intent to reply. In this way we begin true communication and relationship building.” We feel that chiropractors and chiropractic students should investigate the 33 principles seeking first to understand, then to learn to communicate in an understandable manner. Looking at what has been written in the past will build a foundation for future investigation of the principles of chiropractic. Ian D. Coulter wrote,³ “The tasks of developing a philosophy of chiropractic is both backward-looking, in that it must identify the historical roots and the context in which the concepts arose, and forward-looking, in that it will subject the past to critical evaluation and debate.” While developing as human beings, we create our lives, careers, and relationships based on habits. These are formed first through thoughts, ideas, and opinions and then developed through reading, discussing and contemplating the writings of others. R.W. Stephenson worked to present a systematic, organized text of chiropractic philosophy to build a foundation for future chiropractors. This foundation is needed today as much as in 1927.

The model recommended in this paper suggests granting the *Chiropractic Textbook* consideration when forming our paradigms or assumptions, this will result in the

creation of habitual thought patterns; the patterns that will influence the outcome of our interaction with others. Why are we chiropractors? Why do we do what we do? Do we have a vivid picture in our mind of the “why?” Stephen Covey thinks it is important to understand the way we are perceiving, understanding, and interpreting the data received. This data is being filtered through our habitual thought patterns we acquired by contemplation of principles. Through understanding and communication, we can build successful relationships with each other to build a strong profession based on principles. We have a choice to first understand and then be understood. If we do not, we will continue to promulgate the dogma and the “anti-dogma” dogma that currently plagues our profession.

Habit #6 Synergize

Habit 6 represents synergy. It proposes that it is not my way, not your way, but a third way that is better than either of us might derive individually. It is the fruit of mutual respect; of understanding and even celebrating our differences in solving problems and seizing opportunities. Synergistic teams and families thrive on individual strength so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Principle 4 states,² “Life is a Triunity having three necessary united factors, namely, Intelligence, Force and Matter.” All three must be present and synergized to personify the true potential of the power that is within each of us, just as chiropractic must have synergy between the philosophy, science, and art to remain strong. Because of innate intelligence, we do not have to rely solely upon the educated mind to comprehend this potential, but can acknowledge and depend on the activity of innate intelligence to be functioning at capacity within the limitations of matter in where it resides.

“...the philosophy of chiropractic is as vital to the profession as the science and the art.”

Habit #7 Sharpen the Saw

Covey’s 7th habit called “Sharpen the Saw” is about constantly renewing ourselves in the 4 basic areas of the physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual realms. In order to “sharpen the saw” we must not only develop habits, but we must develop good habits. We must identify our values to be able to live and teach congruently with the chiropractic principles. We must discover what our own paradigms or assumptions are and continually develop the knowledge and skills that will create the desire to understand; only then can we communicate the philosophy of chiropractic.

CONCLUSION

It is our opinion that the philosophy of chiropractic is as vital to the profession as the science and the art.

“Science, Art and Philosophy. Science tells us what it is; art tells us how it is done, and philosophy, the why of the other two.”²
Stephenson

Professionals in other fields have used Covey’s 7 habits as a model for success in conveying their ideas and incorporating thoughtful applications to their principles. Areas of medicine, pharmacology, and education have taken the 7 habits and created effective communication processes.^{4,5,6} The chiropractic profession could make similar attempts.

While we acknowledge that this particular model is not perfect, the concepts it contains

are useful and practical and worthy of consideration in a model for chiropractors. (Appendix A) This model can be examined and then applied to create another avenue for dialogue, advancing the philosophy of chiropractic and serving as a platform for learning to better understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic.

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Appendix A. Summary of the Model for Learning to Understand and Communicate the Philosophy of Chiropractic Using Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

<i>Covey's 7 Habits</i>	<i>Application to Chiropractic</i>
<p><i>Habit #1 Be Proactive</i> We are conditioned to respond in a certain way to a given stimulus.</p>	<p>Action is the fundamental element in how we adapt to the internal and external environment and how we maintain homeostasis. If a message is interpreted incorrectly, misdirected responses and behaviors could result.</p>
<p><i>Habit #2 Begin with the End in Mind</i> Create a vivid picture or paradigm so that can be used as a frame of reference to which everything else is examined. If one starts with a flawed premise, a valid conclusion cannot be reached.</p>	<p>Action begins in the brain and is only mental or abstract. Transmission then occurs along efferent nerve fibers, and is expressed at the periphery. Actions become physical through personification.</p>
<p><i>Habit #3 Put First Things First</i> This habit is being principle-centered and keeping vision and values before you. Align your life with your principles, be congruent, understand, and communicate.</p>	<p>Learning to understand and communicate the philosophy of chiropractic, means studying and understanding the principles of chiropractic. Principles provide the foundation upon which we may build ethical guidelines in understanding and communicating the philosophy of chiropractic.</p>
<p><i>Habit #4 Think Win-Win</i> The frame of mind and heart that seeks mutual benefit and is based on mutual respect in all interactions.</p>	<p>As a profession, we should communicate and continually review our paradigms and assumptions, and the process by which they are developed in a win-win manner.</p>
<p><i>Habit #5 Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood</i> Listen to understand others, instead of with the intent to reply. Through understanding, we begin communication and relationship building.</p>	<p>Through better understanding and communication within the profession, we can build successful relationships with each other to build a stronger profession based on principles.</p>
<p><i>Habit #6 Synergize</i> Synergy focuses on providing a better way than if people worked alone. Synergistic teams thrive on individual strength so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.</p>	<p>Chiropractic must have synergy between its members and the philosophy, science, and art to remain strong.</p>
<p><i>Habit #7 Sharpen the Saw</i> We need to constantly renew ourselves in the basic areas: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. We must not only develop habits, but we must develop good habits.</p>	<p>We need to identify our own values to be able to live and teach congruently with the chiropractic principles. We must discover our own paradigms and develop the knowledge and skills that will create the desire to understand; only then can we communicate the philosophy of chiropractic.</p>