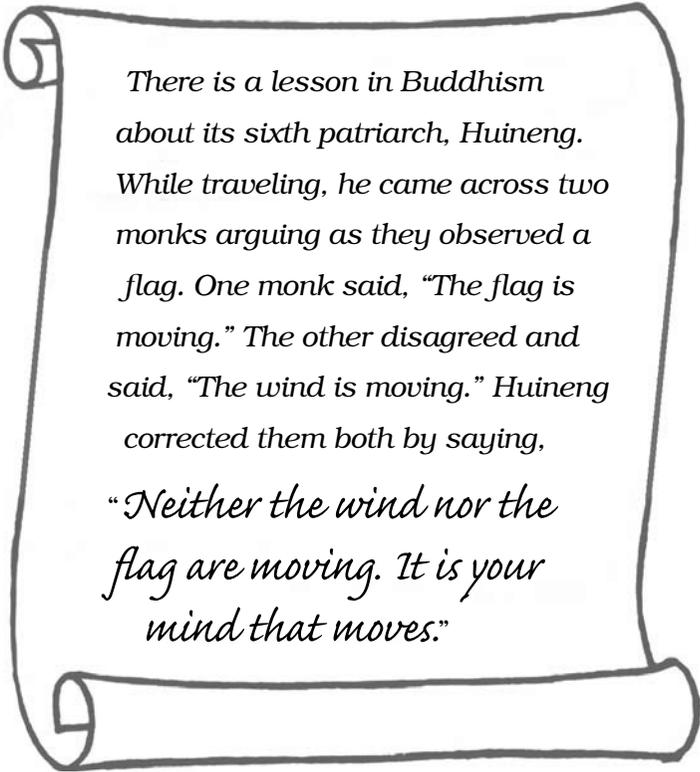


CHAPTER 13

Dear Reader,

*It's the
mind that
moves*



There is a lesson in Buddhism about its sixth patriarch, Huineng. While traveling, he came across two monks arguing as they observed a flag. One monk said, "The flag is moving." The other disagreed and said, "The wind is moving." Huineng corrected them both by saying, "Neither the wind nor the flag are moving. It is your mind that moves."

Dear Reader,

I hope this series of letters has helped you to better understand Perceptual Control Theory and think in some new and different ways. It's a lot to make sense of, so give yourself time to let these ideas percolate in your mind. Use the TLC process — Try it on, Let it go, Check it out — to make small changes.* (See the TLC worksheet on page 221.) Start with one skill-building idea and practice it until it becomes a habit. Ask more questions of yourself and others. Try to catch yourself when you make a statement, and see if

you can turn it into a question. Or see if you can ask questions that get you further faster, shifting awareness higher up the levels of perception. Build on your strengths and slowly eliminate what you see as weaknesses.

My goal in writing this book is to help you better understand a fundamentally different way to think about behavior. As I've tried to deepen my own understanding of PCT, I've tried to keep in mind two things. First, keep it simple. (Think about how a plant lives rather than focusing on a more complex system, like a person.) Second, look to the model. For example, once I really understood feedback loops, a whole new world opened up for me. Even in the writing of this book, I reorganized my understanding of PCT. I now find that I can shift my awareness more easily because I am better able to realize when my reference doesn't match my perception. I know that what others say and do is *just information*, I remember to ask myself, *What's this all about?* when I'm struggling, seeking the reference until I don't need to ask it any longer. I focus on *bumping it up* and stop focusing on "the doing." I make connections when I know I'm going to be working with others, and I take the time to connect references at a higher level. I now ask more than I tell. When "dis" happens, my job is to figure out who I want to be. I know the only person I can control is me, and it's all about me. When I'm able to do this, I have less stress and can take more effective control of my life.

We as humans are complex living systems. Like other living systems, we have internal "just right" conditions that we try to match. All behavior is about controlling for a match between a perception (the present state as it is recorded) and a reference (the ideal state we want at that moment). The actions we take are intended to reduce the difference (error) between the two. PCT explains that behavior is all about relationships — the relationship be-

tween the reference and the perception, the relationship between the environment and ourselves, the relationship between the results of our actions and our perception, and a whole lot of other relationships. One piece of data isn't enough to give us an understanding of what we observe. Although the basic feedback loop that diagrams the process of control is simple, the behavioral hierarchy is an intricate web of interconnected loops that grows and changes with experience.

As you learn more about PCT and help others learn, remember that motivation comes from *error*, a mismatch between a want and a have. Motivation comes not from the want of the teacher, but from the want of the student. Also remember that when we learn, we are going to make mistakes. The highest form of learning, reorganization, is riddled with random acts and lots of error.

If you are a parent, when in conflict with your children, try to remember to reduce your own error first. Take the time to make an agreement as a family to connect references on the kind of family you want to be. Model the behaviors you most want your children to practice. And don't forget to ask, ask, ask!

If you are a manager, understand that organizations are made up of individuals, and change happens one person at a time, often in baby steps. Help your employees self-evaluate, and remember that no matter what business you are in, you are in the people business.

To those of you in the helping professions, ask yourselves the question Bill Powers often asks, "What does it mean to help someone?" My answer would be the same as Tim Carey's in his book *Method of Levels*: "Get out of the way." As a helper, all I can do is ask you to examine your own thinking and your references at higher and higher levels.

To those of you who have the energy of youth on your



CONCLUSION

side, and for those of you who have a wealth of life experiences, I hope you have learned to take more effective control of your own life. How you perceive the world around you has a profound impact. Make an agreement with yourself about the person you want to be, and end each day asking, “In what ways was I the person I wanted to be today?”

I encourage you to evaluate yourself more and evaluate others less. Remember this book is all about you! It is about your truth, your relationships with others, and most importantly your relationship with yourself! And finally, I hope you’ve enjoyed meeting my friends, the recipients of these letters. Each of them in his or her own way has been my teacher, and teaching is the greatest gift you can give the world.

I hope you've learned a lot!

*This is where the cheat
sheet/guiding principles
page will go...*

Try it on...

What are a few things you want to try to do differently?

Let it go...

What are a few things (thinking and actions) you are willing to let go of?

Check it out...

After you try it on for a few days, come back and reflect on what difference it made.

