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Building a Foundation for Confidence Thinking in the Acquisition and Development of New Choices

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Building a Foundation for Confidence Thinking in the Acquisition and Development of New Choices

Keywords

Choice, Confidence, Critical Thinking, Decision-Making, Cognitions of Choice, New Choice

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Abstract:

Choice is connected to higher critical thinking involving decision-making and is a skill that can be developed by building a foundation for confidence thinking. In decision making the individual gathers input at a sensory and critical thinking level, which may then be integrated into a plan of action. Choices can require a simple yes/no response or can be complex and multi-faceted. Not all choices require deep critical processing; but when faced with decisions that require this; the individual may feel more confident if they trust their ability to make choices accurately, with confidence, and efficiently. An assessment to explore *confidence thinking* from a three-tiered level approach is offered as a tool to bring definition to an individual's level of functioning in the critical thinking skills involved in choice. Level one thinking skills are focused on cognitive-behavioral skills development; level two at the development of positive psychology skills, and level three at the development of conscious thinking at a transcendent level. This assessment tool is at a preliminary stage and will require further development to bring reliability and validity, but currently offers a 150 question test that taps into nine traits related to levels 1-3 confidence thinking that is involved in the development of critical thinking skills related to choice. The model Cognitions of Choice© offers twenty-four critical thinking skills that are connected to the development of choice. The levels approach is meant to assist the individual in moving into deeper critical thinking levels by neutralizing negative thinking patterns, reprogram neural hotwiring and construct healthier social perceptions and life choices.

Introduction:

Choices can require a simple yes/no response or be complex and multifaceted. For some individuals and for anyone in certain situations even the simplest choice can be difficult. Choice is connected to a larger domain-making of behavioral skills related to decision-making. With this assessment *confidence thinking* is defined by nine separate traits that are critical thinking skills that allow people to make choices that may be fundamentally necessary in the development of choice. The nine traits are factored into three levels that differentiate the level of skill and confidence to make choices. While it is true people can have more or less confidence in different areas of their life; this assessment provides a global view at how one goes about making choices to provide the individual a snapshot of their skills to determine where there may be room for growth and development in the development of confidence for choice-making. The

three levels model provides the individual feedback and a place to begin working on improving skills in confidence levels for making choices.

The nine traits are sub-divided into three categories that define the level of confidence thinking in choice making to begin exploration in defining the individual's current level of functioning. Each of these nine domains fall under a broader category of decision-making (Levels 1-3) used to examine the development of confidence skills for choice-making.

Levels of Choice Thinking:

Let's take a look at how gathering this information may be useful in developing confidence for choice making.

Decision-Making: A critical thinking skill in which an individual gathers input at a sensory and critical thinking level which is integrated to create a decision or plan of action, i.e. in this case "confidence for choice making."

The **Levels of Choice** involves a step process toward deeper critical thinking that are social memories, thoughts, feelings, behaviors and underlying beliefs that can be learned or are the result of feedback and perceptions. Thoughts and feelings (**Cognitions**) influence underlying beliefs and behavioral choices. It is these cognitions that drive the belief structures that influence beliefs and behaviors; therefore, the interest in exploring the individual's "cognition of choice." These choices are made from a composite of life experiences the individual has integrated into their definition of self or identity. Some choices are healthy others may be unhealthy and can influence our perception of self, empowerment, and view of our position in the world.

Because choices are influenced by learning and a set of responses we store in our memory bank; we can learn new responses and develop skills to create new choices. Many choices occur in response to automatic thinking. If the individual's automatic thoughts are negative or unhealthy, it will limit their available options to choose and create a more satisfying response. As the individual gains more freedom in their ability to make choices and knows more about personal limits and boundaries; choice can be a more readily accessible skill. When the individual becomes more familiar with the manner in which they engage in choice, make-decisions, process information and create options they have a wider range of responses available to them. In time, the individual can be assisted in experiencing a higher level of comfort and move away from

a mechanical automatic response to choices that involve critical thinking at a conscious level. To accomplish this, the individual may require the assistance of a counselor or therapist to provide the necessary feedback to challenge inaccurate, limiting, or unhealthy perceptions of self.

Not all choices require deep critical processing; but when faced with decisions that require this; the individual will feel more confident if they trust their ability to make choices accurately, with confidence, and efficiently.

Sometimes in life we are over-whelmed by having too many available choices. Having the ability to discern what may lead toward results that yield options that are satisfying, results in safety, or create desirable outcomes is optimal. Some choices pose dilemmas that may involve moral decision-making or tap into aspirational values that allow the individual to face a challenge or stretch to grow and transcend beyond the mundane. Choice at this level may exist at a more pure conscious level and afford a higher degree of freedom, and emotional intelligence.

Admittedly, no one assessment can possibly measure and define individual confidence in choice-making. This is offered to provide the individual with a tool to better understand their ability to engage in choice with confidence, assess their level of decision-making with choice, and set goals for developing critical thinking skills that open the door for them to experience more freedom to choose at a conscious level. Although categories may never truly be entirely discrete; the levels are presented in this manner for didactic purposes and for ease of teaching the concepts that will allow the individual to learn or aspire to develop the skill set in each category.

Creating Confidence Thinking Assessment Purpose: The acquisition of critical thinking and decision-making skills to assist in the generation, and development of confidence within making new choices.

Level 1: Choices at this level focus on specific cognitive-behavioral skills. This option is to move from *fear-driven response* patterns toward *assertive* engagement which result in *congruency* between thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and underlying belief structures. When there is congruency the pathway offers a more open channel and less anxiety, or stress may be experience in choice-making.

Level 2: As the individual moves away from automatic negative response patterns they engage with a health and wellness perspective or positive psychological thought process. The goal in this level is to develop an *optimistic* viewpoint and see oneself as

having options that create desirable outcomes. Moving toward *empowerment* of self and others in a healthy manner promotes a wellness mentality. Ultimately, as the individual gains more freedom to choose; a higher level of skill and confidence and trust in their ability to make choices will emerge and they will align with empowerment and replace automatic thought patterns that may be self-destructive or unhealthy. Optimally, this new found positive perspective is meant to reduce anxiety or stress and support a congruent perception within thoughts, feelings, behaviors and underlying beliefs that they have acquired in working through Level 1 skills development of confidence thinking. The goal in Level 2 is to build *resiliency* in the individual to allow them to experience movement in creating choice at a conscious level. In moving out of feeling trapped into making automatic responses (challenged at Level 1), they are guided toward creating choices at will that enable them to experience positive psychological thoughts that fortify a healthy self-identity and move toward a higher degree of confidence with respect for life.

Level 3: This involves aspirational goals for living at a level that transcends the mundane. Often in life we are faced with challenges that involve existential themes, i.e. love/hate; life/death, etc. Although our day to day existence may not always present these themes so apparently; they exist in our thoughts at an unconscious level and may color our experiences and responses to choice. In moving toward relying on higher level critical thinking the individual may experience some initial increase in anxiety; therefore, support from a trusted therapist or counselor would be beneficial. The challenge at this level is to stretch the boundaries and expand thinking to go outside the box and to aspire toward living on a higher plane. In our individualistic Westernized culture we expect many freedoms that do not always translate into a collective consciousness of *respect* for all living things.

Societal values may impose judgments or perceptions that result in “us/them” thinking that does not necessarily translate into viewing all living creatures as worthy of *dignity*. Finally the integration of living with the consciousness of dignity and respect for all creates *integrity* that guides the individual toward choice that transcends mechanistic or automatic thoughts, goes beyond the self-concept of empowerment which is a necessary building block to the development of higher consciousness and transcendent thinking.

The Levels Approach: Each of the lower Levels 1 & 2 is a fundamental building block toward Level 3. In therapy or counseling the goal may focus on development of Level 1 or 2 as the end objective. Not all individuals would desire to work on the development of Level 3 confidence/choice/critical thinking. Not all life choices require Level 2 or Level 3 thinking skills in order to make a healthy choice with confidence. Regardless, having an understanding or framework for choice development may be a healthy life-skill. Accessing critical thinking allows a wider range of response, and a

broader locus of control. Knowing how to make choices, and applying basic decision making surrounding who, what, where, when, and why can prevent unwanted life experiences from occurring. Knowing when to act and make a choice (timing) can be the difference between having a desired opportunity or not available to you. The more an individual is armed with information about their choice making ability, and they practice and rehearse the skills of choice making, the more confident they will become and the better they will be at making choices. Knowing when to pull back can prevent someone from becoming over-whelmed. We are often bombarded by choices; and having a clear sense of own's ability may assist in eliminating unwanted stress or anxiety. Having a model to apply in situations that evoke choice making may assist the individual in assessing the situation, consider the required level of choice, and determine whether or not a decision of choice needs to be made.

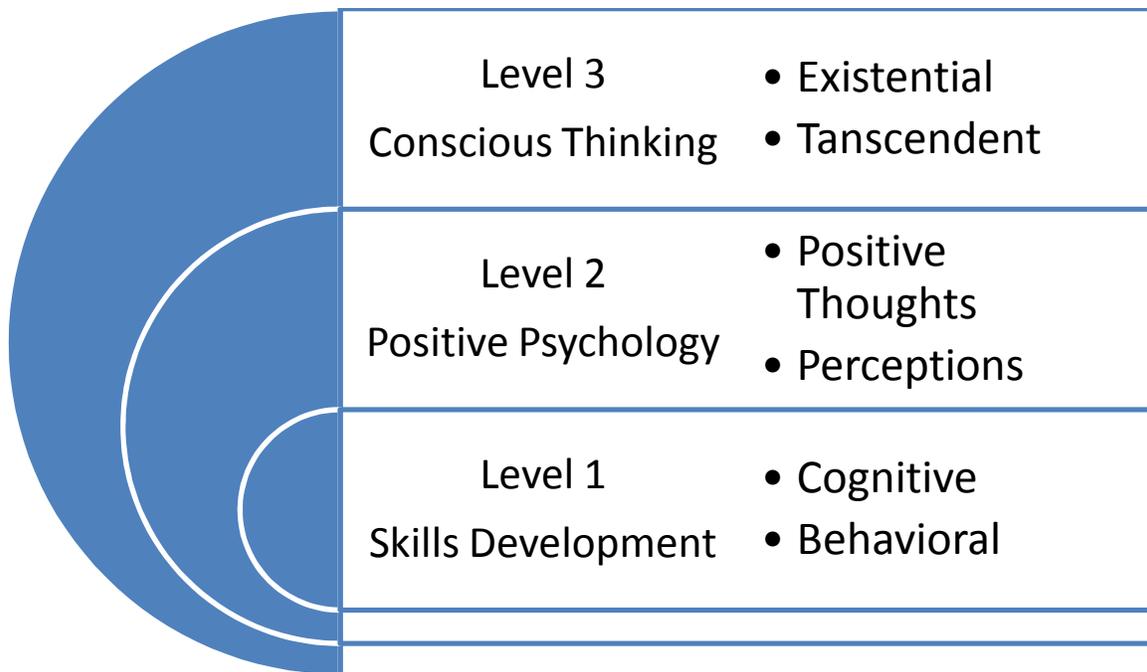
Recognizing that not any one model is perfect and imposes inherent limits will allow for an honest and accurate assessment of this instrument. It is only a tool, and one means within the experience of therapy or counseling. The individual may gather more self-information. When recognized within the limits that are present; it can be a valuable teaching too to assist the individual in self-development of the skills of confidence, positive perceptions, and conscious thinking to make healthy life choices and promote a wellness mentality. As a foundational model for the development of critical thinking skills for confidence in choice making it explores the individual's cognitions of choice, how they connect to choice at a personal level, and see themselves in their ability to apply choice with confidence. It is a fluid model that moves from a mechanistic view of self to a highly conscious and transcendent view. This model is based in the thinking that since unhealthy thoughts and behaviors can be learned; they can unlearned. It offers a hopeful approach to treatment that allows and promotes the individual to engage, acquire new skills and thinking to be applied in a variety of settings, and experiences so that it will generalize and be maintained at the newly acquired level of consciousness in choice and decision-making.

Many times when client or patients came into treatment they do not recognize they have options or the ability to choose. Sometimes they simply lack the skills necessary to make a choice. This assessment will provide them a starting place to work with their therapist, or counselor. Knowing there is a solution and a pathway to learn a skill or set of skills that will address an identified problem can provide comfort. Recognition and validation from a trusted therapist or counselor for effort to change unhealthy behaviors can spur motivation to learn and change unhealthy patterns of behavior. As stated, this is a foundational model that provides three tiers or levels of critical thinking for confidence thinking in choice-making that is viewed under the broader umbrella of decision-making. The nine traits; three at each level ascribe factors that are used to define each level of critical thinking to offer better understanding and bring definition to

their skill in choice making. Although there may be many factors that align with each level of critical thinking in the development of confidence in making choices these variables have been carefully chosen as they are considered the primary focus within each level of choice. Limiting each level to three conceptual traits assist in teaching these concepts to the individual that will promote ease of understanding in committing the concept to memory, and applying these concepts to everyday life experiences.

Choice is aligned with freedom which is highly valued in Western culture. When an individual has freedom to choose they are less likely to experience anxiety or depressive symptoms. Trusting one's skill and ability to choose may result in a higher level of confidence. Accessing critical thinking generates a wider range of choices which is the stated intent or purpose of this assessment tool along with the acquisition of skills to generate confidence in the development of new life-choices.

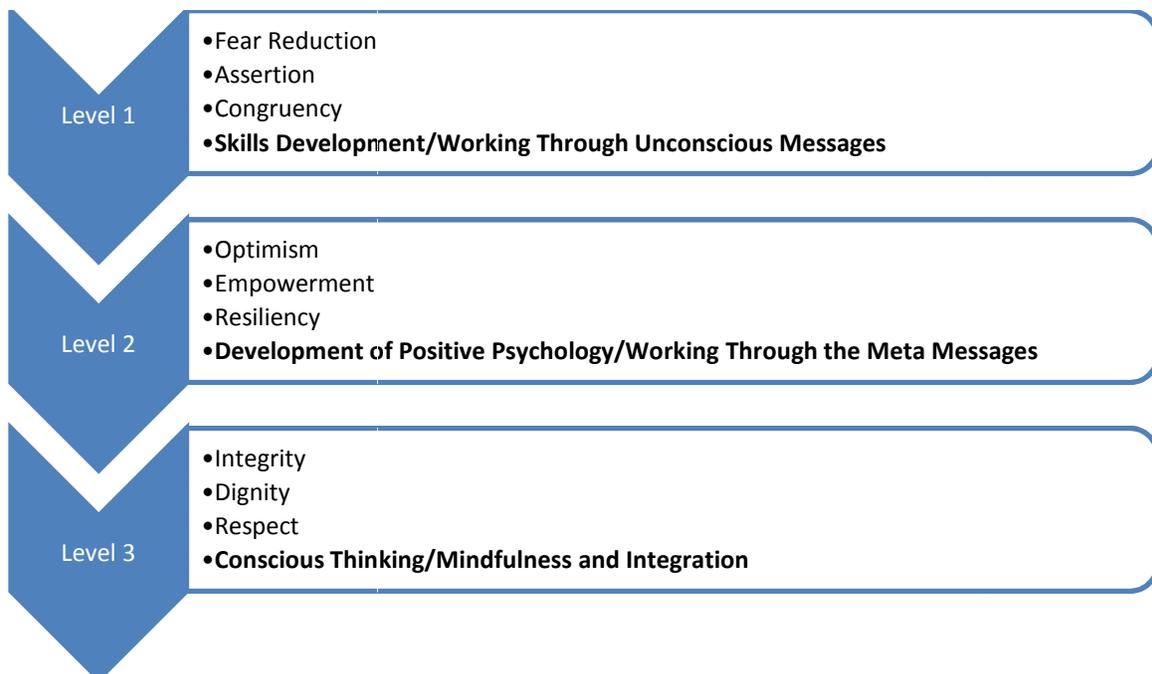
Levels Acquisition of Decision-Making Skills to Improve Confidence Thinking for New Choices



Traits and Critical Thinking Skills Developmental Model in Building Confidence:

Trait theory suggests that each individual possess a combination of traits that make up their personality which uniquely defines them. Some traits are *central* to the development of personality and are considered to remain constant; others are *secondary* and a reaction to a situation. Central Traits can be defined as habitual patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion. The age old nature-nurture argument persists in questioning whether or not biology or environment more strongly influences our development. An individual may possess the traits of or disposition toward the ability to exhibit confidence, but not have developed a high degree of confidence due to environmental factors, learning opportunity, trauma events, loss, abuse, or any number of situations that may have interfered with the development and maintenance of critical thinking skills that support healthy choice. Cognitions of Choice offers a model that is presented in a three levels approach to correct the neural programming that interferes with the utilization of higher critical thinking skills that result in healthy choice or decision making skills. The *creating confidence thinking assessment* is designed to analyze the individual's relationship to choice making to provide a window as to where to begin confidence thinking skills development.

Foundational Traits for Confidence Thinking: Critical Thinking in the Development of Choice



COGNITIONS OF CHOICE (COC): PHILOSOPHY FOR LIVING

Cognitions of Choice (COC) is a compliment to *Habits of Mind*.^{*} COC offers a network of neural programming that engages self-dialog between automatic thinking, critical thinking, mindfulness, and integrated life choices. It evokes an active process of resiliency and hopefulness for living in the present with a healthy respect for future orientation and a transcendent wellness perspective.

Cognitions of Choice are used to neutralize negative self-defeating cognitions that interfere with self-harmony and creating balanced life choices. These cognitions not only offer patterns of thinking that may be deeply programmed or engrained at the level of core identity, but also offer intuitive guideposts for making healthy life choices. If they are not already present within the parameters of thought, with practice they can be taught at varying levels of cognition and become a part of the integrated life filter or functional force as a means of offering psychological immunity.

Cognitions: Are not just the thoughts we hold, but incorporate the actions we take based upon these patterns of thinking. Cognitions connect to our values and personality traits that create our neural hotwiring or programming that construct our social perceptions and life choices. Our cognitions guide our habits of being and life philosophy.

- ✚ Unconscious (automatic thought)
- ✚ Meta (Thoughts about thinking)
- ✚ Conscious or Mindfulness
- ✚ Integrated or Authentic Perception

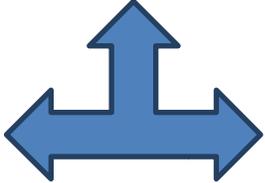
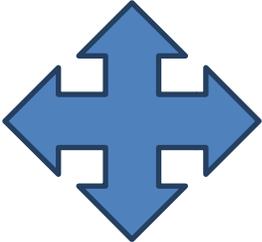
Harmonious Balance: Life is constantly changing and creating obstacles, challenges, or directional changes that we may or may not be prepared to face. It is essential to focus on establishing a core center that stems from our functional force that allows us zone awareness and holistic immunity from imbalance or trauma.

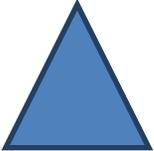
- ✚ Grounding
- ✚ Consciousness/Mindfulness
- ✚ Integral
- ✚ Effortless/Authentic Resonance or Oneness

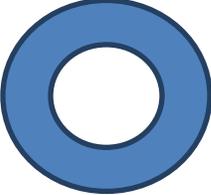
Golden Rule: Is a simple reminder of the importance of life protection and reciprocal respect. It is a relational rule that reinforces *Integrated Cognition* or *Harmonious life balance*.

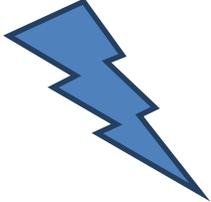
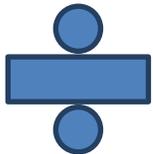
- ✚ Don't Hurt Yourself
- ✚ Don't Let Anyone Hurt You
- ✚ Don't Hurt Anyone Else

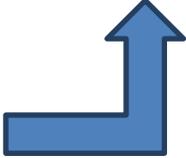
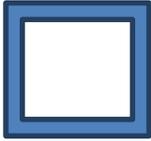
COGNITIONS OF CHOICE~ PHILOSOPHY FOR LIVING

COGNITION	IMAGE	MOTTO	ASPIRATIONAL GUIDEPOST	✓ DISPOSITION I PRESENT
Consider Options		Motto: There are always choices!	Slow down and review, while exploring possibilities	
Create Alternatives		Motto: Let's see another way I can look at this!	You can always create a plan B, and think ahead, and even in life situations where you can't you still have choices	
Discernment		Motto: I can discriminate between healthy and unhealthy choices	Remain true to your values and respect personal boundaries for yourself and others	
Altruism		Motto: I am giving back because I am grateful!	It is not about seeing others as less fortunate; it involves understanding loss and trauma can happen to anyone	
Positive Mental Attitude		Motto: Things have a way of working out !	Life is an exceptional gift to be appreciated at all levels of functioning	

<p>Cultural Appreciation</p>		<p>Motto: Aesthetics are present in all aspects of life</p>	<p>Appreciate the differences because that is where real natural beauty exists</p>	
<p>Open Communication</p>		<p>Motto: I want to connect to you!</p>	<p>Listening occurs only when we are present and receptive, without this no intimacy occurs</p>	
<p>Commitment</p>		<p>Motto: I am here for the long haul!</p>	<p>Being connected allows us to prevent isolation and anxiety, and is an opportunity to validate one another</p>	
<p>Congruency & Compatibility</p>		<p>Motto: Things need to fit to maintain wellness</p>	<p>Complimentary views or perspectives can exist within us and between others, it creates harmony</p>	
<p>Transcendence</p>		<p>Motto: I can see the future!</p>	<p>We need to live in the present while being mindful of the future; without this we can become vulnerable to discouragement or despair</p>	

<p>Future Orientation</p>		<p>Motto: I am hopeful!</p>	<p>Passing the baton allows the relay to occur between generations and creates continuity in life</p>	
<p>Seeking Solutions</p>		<p>Motto: I Investigate life with an open mind and heart</p>	<p>Investigation with an open mind and heart goes beyond simple problem solving, it involves relational joining</p>	
<p>Respect for Equality</p>		<p>Motto: We all do the best we can and have something to offer</p>	<p>We don't all have the same abilities or gifts but on a human level we all matter and contribute to life</p>	
<p>Integrity</p>		<p>Motto: I will do the best I am able and respect all living creatures ~ I give you my word!</p>	<p>Being authentic and representing what you communicate to others with consistency offers a solid foundation</p>	
<p>Sharing</p>		<p>Motto: I have more than enough!</p>	<p>One of the greatest joys is giving to others willingly and not expecting anything in return</p>	
<p>Reciprocal Joy</p>		<p>Motto: We matter to each-other!</p>	<p>Learning to appreciate another beyond our flaws is a reason to celebrate</p>	

<p>Protective Bond</p>		<p>Motto: I am there for you with love, acceptance, and forgiveness</p>	<p>I will nurture you and release when you communicate you are ready to go forward</p>	
<p>Courageous Acts</p>		<p>Motto: I will take a reasonable risk!</p>	<p>We all have limitations because moving forward and being able to ask for help when needed allows us to live a successful life</p>	
<p>Harmonious Balance</p>		<p>Motto: I live life in balance</p>	<p>Life will through us curve balls and we can feel off balance, but protecting our core allows us holistic wellness</p>	
<p>Whimsical Spontaneity</p>		<p>Motto: Life is fun~ Let's see what happens</p>	<p>We need to learn to laugh at ourselves, and enjoy others who grow from doing the same</p>	
<p>Fearless Conviction</p>		<p>Motto: I am ready!</p>	<p>Fearlessness is being committed to trying and being in a state of readiness to learn</p>	

<p>Charisma</p>		<p>Motto: My authentic self is the best version of me!</p>	<p>Accepting ourselves, forgiving our limitations, and loving ourselves provides us with a magnet that will draw others who focus on living in wellness toward us</p>	
<p>Self-Encouragement</p>		<p>Motto: I got this!</p>	<p>The world doesn't always offer ready-made encouragement or self-empowerment, we have to learn how to find it to progress and stay well</p>	
<p>Self-Respect</p>		<p>Motto: It is my time!</p>	<p>For everything there is a season and understanding that we are worthy and deserving allows us to live authentically</p>	

*Costa, A. www.Instituteforhabitsofmind.com

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