WHAT ARE YOU WORTH? ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM

Dr. Aldrich “Pat” Patterson: Okay, good afternoon, I'm Dr. Pat Patterson, and this is the workshop on self-esteem. I'm a psychologist at the Counseling Center, also known as Counseling and Wellness, and I'm in my 27th year at the University. We are located on the fourth floor of the Student Services Center, 430. And I really appreciate being welcomed here by the Wellness Center to give this workshop.

For the last 27 years, I have offered an on-going group on self-esteem that meets Monday nights. However, in order to be a member of that group you do have to be screened. So if there's anybody in here that thinks that you might need to work on self esteem and would like to attend the group next semester, beginning of next semester, just show up to the center and then you can possibly go through a 12-week experience with me and the information that I'm going to present to you today.

Self-esteem is a life-long thing. It takes a long time for it to develop. And so as good as I think this workshop is, in one hour I'm not going to be able to give you completely what you need to improve self-esteem. I am going to, however, be able to give you information that you could take with you, that you could take to your classes, that you can study, that you can work on.

How many of you are here for a classroom assignment? How many of you are here for fraternity, sorority, some other kind of group assignment for another class? How many of you are here because you're interested in the topic? Okay good, all right.

Well, what I want to do is I want to make this interactive. We have about 50 minutes and I want you to feel free to stop me at any moment, ask me a question, because that's the way, I like to work it. I think it's better when there is an interplay between the speaker and the audience, because I think we can get a little bit more out of it. Because I am going to try to stuff a lot of information here, I will be going fast.

What I first want to do is kind of define self-esteem and tell you what it's about. Self-esteem is the lifeblood of psychological survival. We need self-esteem. Positive self-esteem can vaccinate us, it could be the vaccine that inoculates us against the negative forces in our life. And it empowers us to take responsibility for ourselves and make good decisions. However, on the other hand, if you have low self esteem what it can do is it can eat away at your self-belief. It can eat away at your self-belief.

Self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself. Self-image is how you see yourself. They are similar, but different. Self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself and self-image is how you see yourself. It takes a long time to develop in a positive or negative direction. And some of the building blocks of self-esteem are safety. We need to feel safe and secure and unafraid. Identity. You know we need to have a clear sense of who we are. The number one thing to success, motivation and achievement, and self-esteem is having knowledge of self.

The question then becomes, “Who am I?” And when you can have an answer to that question, you have a clear sense of who you are yourself. You also want to ask yourself whose am I? Where do I come from? Who do I want to be and how do others see me? Those are the questions you have to reflect on and contemplate when you start thinking about this whole self-esteem thing. Because face it, we are
shaped by the forces of our family. We are shaped by the forces of our peers. Our perceptions of self in television. What we read and how we fit into society. That all shapes the way we see ourselves.

Another building block is belongingness. People who have strong self-esteem feel like they belong. And the people without – that I've been working with over the years, and I've seen probably 6,000 people in counseling over the years – are the ones that are struggling with self-esteem, often times don't feel like they belong. They don't feel like they're a part of a group. They don't feel like they have a posse to hang out with. They don't feel like people like them. They feel like they're constantly being judged. So belongingness is important. Having a family, a strong family unit that you feel a part of is important. Not everybody has that. A lot of people come from some jacked up families and we know that for a fact.

We also know that a building block is competence. When we feel competent, we feel better about ourselves. Competence is really a trial and error process. In order to be competent, and successful, you've got to make mistakes. If you're too critical on yourself when you make mistakes, you're going to have a negative self-view. So you got to understand that in order to be successful and to feel good about yourself, you have to see yourself, you have to see your mistakes or things, as things that you can build upon to become stronger. But in order to feel competent, competent, and have competence, that comes from doing. You've got to do it. You've got to get out of your safety zone and you got to take some risks. Because often times young people, we don't know what we don't know. And when you don't know what you don't know, you make decisions based on what you do know. And if what you do know is limited, you will make a limited decision. So you're at an age, and everybody in here is young. Yeah most of you in here are under 25, I'm sure. Anybody over 25 in the room, with the exception of you know, Joe and I. And actually, in my head I'm 25. My body is 55, but hey, can't win them all, you know.

A part of self-esteem is probably having delusional thoughts. But it's a good thing if it's in the positive direction. But you know, the whole thing here is you want, you want to experiment, you want to test yourself, you want to find out what you like and don't like, because all that's self knowledge. It's okay to be you. That's what I'm saying. It's okay to be you and it's important to own who and what you are. Not some other image of how you think you should be based on society's definition of that. And that's important, especially, and I'm really right now I'm talking to the women. Because a lot of your messages are from, from the media by totally anorexic models that, that often times your beauty is compared to, and really, they are not normal, they are the extremes. And they, they're not, they don't represent you. And so it's important to, to draw your self-esteem from what you know to be true about you. And there's things that you're good at, and of course there are things you can improve on.

And the other building block of self-esteem is purpose. Purpose. What, what were you sent here for? What is your intention? What do you hope to accomplish in your life? When we have a clear idea of that, that makes us feel good about who we are. You know, I don't think necessarily my purpose in life was to be a psychologist. I'm really sure my purpose in life was to be a father. I think my purpose in life was to be a good citizen and a good son. But most of all I think I'm a teacher, and I think, even though I'm not defined as a teacher, I think that what I do is teach. And I think that what I'm doing right now is my purpose in life.
Everybody needs to feel, as I said earlier, secure and unafraid. You need to feel effective and competent. In summary, you need to feel accepted by parents and others. And you need to have a sense of worth. A sense of worth. Now it's a funny thing about this whole self-esteem thing. Because it is really interesting what we do with it and where it comes from. One of the things here, one of the causes and affects psychologists will point out is how we are parented by our parents. How we are parented by our parents. You know, our self-esteem is primarily affected by them. They want to blame it on our peers. But it's actually the foundation for your self-esteem comes from your parents. And I'm going to talk about four different categories.

The first one is the love autonomy parent. Now this is the parents who are there, they are both loving and accepting and they produce independent, outgoing, active, assertive, tolerant and high self-esteem students. High self esteem children. They're loving and accepting. However, then we got the next category, the love control parent. These parents of course love their children, these parents are high in affection, but they're also high in control. So they love you but they need to control everything you do. And what happens here is they use this for these children to be dependent, insecure, and low in creativity. The other parenting style is what's called hostile autonomy parents. They raise children, these children are raised by hostile and non-controlling parents who tend to raise children who are disobedient, aggressive and rebellious. The other is hostile control parents. Hostile control parents produce children who are socially withdrawn, sullen, shy, and self-punishing.

Now there are two different types of self-esteem problems. The first one is situational, and the second one is character logical. When in the situational, this is when self esteem surfaces in a particular area of our life. We might have low self-esteem as a student, but that's situational specific. Character logical, though, this derives from a basic identity or statements or self-judging about who you are as a person. It's just pervasive that that belief about who you are is pervasive throughout your life. You are a self-doubter. You have a negative self-voice. You're constantly giving yourself a negative self-message. You basically don't like you. You don't believe when other people give you compliments, because you don't believe it. It's character logic. It can be changed, because it's a learned behavior. And because it is learned, you can unlearn it. And what I want to spend the rest of our time together is unlearning it. Possible ways to unlearn it.

So what I want to do with you, you have some handouts. I want to kind of go over with you some of the symptoms of low self-esteem. And you know, anybody who wants to make a comment can. The first one is having difficulty giving or accepting compliments. Some of you have problems with that. Giving, difficulty giving or accepting compliments. Yeah. The next one is indecisiveness. Can't make a decision. It's hard for you to choose what you want for dinner. Anybody asks you what you want, you say I don't know, where do you want to go, I don't care, what do you want for dinner, I don't know. How many of you are indecisive? That's really, really a big one. And another one here is knowing what you want, but not asking for it. You know what you want, but you're kind of afraid to ask for it. How many of you feel that? You know. What, what fuels that? That keeps you from being able to ask for what you want? You just said, I don't know.

>>Student: [Inaudible].
>> Dr. Patterson: Huh? Because we don't want to hear no. Right? What's so bad about being told no? Sometimes we perceive it as rejection. But remember, how we perceive things is subjective. Just because somebody says no to us, doesn't mean they're rejecting us. But often times if you're struggling with low self-esteem you will see it and perceive it in that way.

The other thing, the other one is rarely accepting, rarely expressing feelings. Holding your feelings in. Holding your anger in. Holding your sadness in. Holding your dislike in. Oftentimes holding your happiness in, or your approval. How many of you do that? Yeah. Okay. Blaming others for dissatisfaction or unhappiness. It's somebody else's fault. Who does that? How many of you blame yourself for dissatisfaction or unhappiness? That's really, really something that's pervasive with people, that struggle with low self-esteem. You know, not feeling in control.

Not feeling in control is a symptom of low self esteem. How many of you have that? Not feeling in control is also one of the main factors in having depression. People get depressed because they don't feel in control. Of course, it's accompanied by other symptoms like hopelessness and helplessness. And worthlessness, and feeling sorry for yourself, and having anger and holding it in. You know, we know all that stuff with depression, but it's also first cousins to anxiety. It's not that unusual for people with low esteem not only to be depressed, but anxious. Anxiety and depression are first cousins. And how they're related is through the one person in their family that's not in control. Not in control. And people who are anxious feel like they're not in control, but they don't feel like there's any place to hide. And so they become anxious. They feel helpless and they feel hopeless too. The difference between them and people that are depressed, is people that are depressed retreat inside themselves. So it's not unusual for those things to be hand in hand, because I see people all the time who have low self esteem who are struggling with both anxiety and depression because they feel like they're stuck. They feel like they will always be in this negative place, this negative voice, not liking themselves. Feeling that they don't fit in. Feeling that other people don't like them. Feeling that they're being judged. And it affects their ability to interact. It affects their willingness to take risk. It affects their willingness and ability to be all they can be, and to partake in things that they want. But they're kind of scared that they won't fit in.

Can any of you relate to that? Do you know anybody who's like that? Can I get a witness in here? Yes. Don't let me go to church on you now. I am black. I am black now and I will go to church on you, and I will take collection. Get it right. Don't get it twisted, now.

Okay we're going through, you know, we're taking furloughs. Professors we need some money. We need some more money, right? Okay. Let's look at the next one. Insecurity. You know insecurity, boy insecurity, insecurity, insecurity. And I know you guys are dealing with it, because you're the ones that are dating. And boy have you ever dated anybody that was insecure? Whew, talk about some drama. I got some drama for your mama, don't we? Yes. What did you mean by that? Oh, right. What do you mean, what did I mean by that? I didn't mean nothing. You know what you meant by that, right. Insecurity. When we are insecure, the filters through which we hear the world are clouded. We hear what we want to hear, that will fuel that feeling, don't we? And that is a big thing with self-esteem. The other one is jealousy. How many of you felt jealously before? Haters, that's what they call it. They don't call it jealously anymore. They just call it haters. Right. But jealousy is one of those things, what makes
the person jealous? Huh? Being insecure. I wish that was me. I wish I had it, oh, they don't deserve it, they're not that smart. Their dad gave it to them. They think that they're all that, right? It's jealous. And most of the time it's because we're a little bit insecure. If we had our own, we wouldn't worry about it.

Another one is irrational thinking. I'm going to talk to you about irrational thinking. But I want to talk about some of it right now. Irrational thinking is like, how many of you ever had a 35-millimeter camera in your hand. Let me see your hand. Basically, I know you all have these point and shoot cameras, so you use your cell phone. But there was a day, Jeff probably remembers, when they had 35 millimeter and they still sell them at stores, where you get this camera, you look through and you adjust on it. Right? Distorted thinking, irrational thinking, is when you look through this camera lens on your world. And the image you see in front of you is blurry, but you don't know it. And when you snap the picture, you get the picture back, you say God this is out of focus. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever seen a picture that you've taken and someone else has taken that's not in focus? That's the way distorted thinking is. You see something that's there, you take a snapshot, the snapshot would be a perception or belief that you then take on as being real and it's not exactly the way you say it. And as a result, you make decisions and assumptions, and draw conclusions based on a blurry image of your reality that's not necessarily it. So part of undoing your self-esteem is learning to see the image in front of you in a more clear way. And I'm going to spend some time talking to you about that.

People who are struggling with low self-esteem, avoid conflict. Hello. Conflict avoiders. Why do you think people with low self-esteem avoid conflict? Why? Afraid of rejection, right? God. You know they're avoiding conflict because we want to be liked. And if I tell them no, they might not like me. If they tell me no, they might, if I tell them no, they might get angry at me. If I tell them no, they might not be my friend. We avoid conflict. But we have all the evidence in the world that shows when we engage in conflict, I'm not talking about go down and the beating somebody up. I'm talking about sitting down and talking to them and sharing feelings. Most of the time, 90 percent of the time I'd say, something positive arises from attempting to take a conflictual situation that you wanted to avoid into something constructive that can then be built upon. That's what it takes. It's scary. Face it. Do people say no to you? You ever had anybody say no to you? All, every day, right? Do we stop liking them? Yeah for a minute, we might pound them on the other side of the head. But we don't stop loving them. We don't stop being their friend. We say okay, I understand. We, most of the time, we move on, we handle our business, we come back and continue to have a relationship with them. But people who are struggling with self-esteem, they think they're an exception to that. They can't be the person that says no. It's not okay for them to say no. Why is that? What happens when you can't say no? Huh? You become a doormat. People take advantage of you. You wind up doing all the stuff at your sorority. Right? You're the person in the family that's always solving the problems. You're the one that's always helping at the party. You're the one who's always rescuing family members, because you are the dependable one. And then they come to respect. And then when you say no, what do they say? What's wrong with you? Are you mad? Are you angry? What’s, why, what happened? Why are you saying no? I'm depending on you. How come you're not saying that to all the other people that say no? We teach people how to treat us. And when we act a certain way they respond to us a certain way. So if you want people to treat you differently, you've got to be different with them. We create the reality we live. And if you want to create
a different reality, you've got to start changing your image. You've got to take a stand. You've got to say no.

I remember years ago, I had a client that had a car. And her roommate always borrowed her car. And she never, ever, said no. The problem is, is her roommate had a car. Her roommate just didn't want to move her car, because she didn't want to lose her parking spot. Hello. But the client was too afraid to say no to her, because she didn't want her to get mad at her or angry. And meanwhile she was using the [inaudible]. Had to pick her up places. Always wanted to borrow her car. Never offered to pay gas. And never ever moved her own car. And never gave the other person rides. That's an example of what conflict avoidance can do.

Another symptom is substance abuse. A lot of us, you know, drink, get high, so we can escape a reality. Face it. Substances give us a false sense of self. That's why cocaine is so powerful. Cocaine is a drug that gives you false self-esteem. False sense of who you are, in the beginning. Then it jumps on your back, eats you up, and makes sell your house or slap your momma to get some coke. But you know and I understand meth does that in the beginning, too. It's the kind of drug where when you take it in the beginning, if it takes one [inaudible] high one month, the second month it takes you two, the third month it takes you four, and it just sucks you up. But people use substances often times to escape a reality they're not happy in. You know, so if you're not happy with who you are, and what you're doing in the world you're in. Then many times, we just decide to go to an open space. I mean don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with having a good time, and we're all going to go there sometime. I'm talking about the people who go there all the time. And they get up in the morning, and they have to smoke a joint, have some [inaudible] before they go to class. They can't deal with reality. So they got to trip to their classes, you can say. Do whatever. You guys know those people, right? Hey, what's up boo boo. Come in the house, come in the house, they're all messed up watching cartoons, right? Yogi. You know. Hey, I had that roommate.

The other one is sexual promiscuities, a symptom of low self-esteem. But so is sexual inability. Oftentimes when you don't feel good about yourself, you don't put yourself in a position to date. You don't think anybody's going to want to be with you. You're too ugly. You're too fat. You're too short. Dark. Your hair's too curly, it's too straight. Your nose is big. Whatever. We always find an excuse. And then there are people who, you know, are sexually promiscuous because they're looking for love in all the wrong places. I saw a woman, years ago, who probably slept with 300 different men. So that happens, one [inaudible] picking up people every night at the bar. You know that's a sign of a very low self-esteem. People that are being used, that have to get drunk when they go out, Thursday, Friday, Saturday night, to sleep with other people, and black out. Don't know who they are, don't know where they've been, don't know why they are who they are. It's certainly a self-esteem issue, because if you respected yourself, you would make better decisions about your sexual choices.

Another one is negative self-talk. This is that voice inside of our head that constantly talks to us. Saying you can't do that. Who do you think you are? You're not all that. You'll never be a doctor. I don't know why you're in college. It's that voice, that's negative, that negative self-voice that puts us down that we learn from our parents, that we learn from our peers, that we picked up from our siblings, that put us
down. That told us that we couldn't do it. That we picked up from society, I don't know why you're trying you'll never, you can't do it, you're female. You can't do it, you're a black male. Why are you doing it? That negative self-voice that we incorporate from the messenger, that we hear from others affects our self-esteem.

Another thing is lack of self-management skills. When we talk about you don't have any goals. You're not planning. You have terrible time management skills. You have terrible study skills. And you really aren't doing the things that you need to do to put yourself in an optimal position to live your dream. And having a low self-esteem is a reflection of that. Feeling that you don't have any choices. When people feel like they don't have choices, of course we feel depressed once again. We also feel anxious if we don't feel like we have choices. When you feel like you don't have choices, you feel like you're limited in what you do have. And that can affect your self-esteem. Most of us have choice. Most of us have choice. But if you're choosing not to implement the choice, you're going to be stuck with what you're stuck with. And then that's not good for you, that's not good for your self-perception. That's not good for the image you have of yourself. And that's definitely not good for the reputation you have for yourself.

Another one is a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. And I've already talked about this as, as being two essential symptoms of depression and anxiety. But people who are struggling with low self esteem oftentimes feel helplessness and powerlessness. Now keep in mind that you don't need to have all these symptoms to have low self-esteem. You can have a couple. Because it all in and of themselves are very, very powerful.

And the last one is feeling sorry for yourself. And that's one of those that's very strong when it comes to depressive symptomology. Any questions about any of that? Okay.

What I want to spend some time here is going over with you 11 distorted thinking styles. In my clinical work, I use 15. But I find that this list of 11 is very, very important. Remember I talked about distorted thinking? It's like looking through a camera lens, taking a picture of an image that you think is clear but it's actually distorted. Okay. And what you want to do is know what your distortions are. Distorted thinking is situational. There are going to be some situations that you never distort your thoughts, and there are going to be other situations that you have more of a tendency to distort your thinking. So it's important when you think about that these distortions to think about it in that way. If you do it, I want you to put a check next to it. If you do a lot, I want you to put a star next to it. I want you to also recognize that sometimes when we engage in distorted thinking we do more than one distortion at a time. I don't have enough time to hear your distortions, to hear your thoughts. Or I can help you identify them, but I can say one thing. If you're struggling with self-esteem it's like telling the people I work with, this is not homework, this is lifework. And if you can start to undo the way you look at yourself, you will alter and shift your life. And it's not going to change overnight, if it took 18, 19, 22, 23 years to get here. But it will change in six or seven weeks if you start to focus on it.

The first thing is self-blaming. You blame yourself for every problem that you have. It's your fault, no matter what it is, it's your fault. You take too much responsibility for it. The other one is over generalization. You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident. If it happens once, you
expect it to happen over and over again. I'll hear it from students all the time. Oh Dr. Patterson, you know, I didn't do well on a math test when I was in the fourth grade, and now I'm terrible at math. I had a boyfriend that cheated on me, once, and now everybody I go out with I expect them to cheat on me. Yes.

>>[Inaudible comment from audience]

>>Dr. Patterson: Kind of, but basically it's over-generalization. Something happens once and you expect it to happen over and over again. Okay. Over, it's over generalized. We already know that all people are not the same. That's one thing I know for sure. All men are not the same, all women are not the same, all experiences are not the same. Another one is filtering. This is a situation where you focus on negative, negative details while magnifying all positive aspects of the situation. You know I, I say to you, what's your name? What's your name young lady?

>>Student [from audience]:

Amy.

>>Dr. Patterson: I say, “Amy I really like your jacket, it looks really good.” And then you say, “Dr. Patterson didn’t comment on my boots or my coat, he must not like them. “That’s filtering. Filtering out the positive aspects of the situation and focusing on the negative. You know, you get a B, you get an A minus on the exam, you filter, and you’re pissed because you didn't get an A. The positive aspects of the situation is that you got an A minus. Okay. You know you didn't get into Harvard, you got into Princeton, and you're angry that you didn't get into Harvard as opposed to saying, “You know, well, I did get into Princeton.” It's not looking at the positive aspects of the situation. Focusing only on the negative.

The other one is catastrophizing. And this is what they're thinking. This is catastrophic thinking. This fuels anxiety. This is for people that are worriers. How many people are worriers? Oh my God. What if this happens? What if that happens? You know what if, what if, what if, what if, what if, ad infinitum. We worry about it, and the problem with worrying is, one: there's no magic to it. And the truth about anxiety is the cycle of physiological response to something that, in all likelihood, has not occurred. It is future based. And people that are “what if” thinkers are worried about the future. And they have a tendency to worry about it when it hasn't happened yet. And they overly worry and they work themselves up sometimes to the point of panic. Sometimes to the point of panic, and that's not a good thing. Okay. “What if” thinking, catastrophic thinking – it really can handcuff us.

The other one is global labeling. There's a tendency to make stereotype generalization about people, places and things, etc., and project these qualities into a global judgment about them. An example would be you go to Food 4 Less, and Food 4 Less had tomatoes that were a little ripe. The global you came up with is Food 4 Less has terrible vegetables. We do this with racial groups, we do this with people we interact with that are of a certain type person. We over generalize that to a bunch of different people.
The other one is polarized thinking. This is perfectionist thinking. Things have to be black and white. You got to be perfect or you're a failure. There's no gray area. But I want to hear, I'm here to tell you today ladies and gentlemen that most things are not black or white. Most things are gray. And you got to include the gray area in your thought. You know. You know just because you didn't get an A doesn't make you a failure if you got an A minus. There's a lot of gray area here, and you got to keep in mind that gray does exist in your polarized thoughts, you know. One or the other. But most of it's in the middle. I'm nearsighted so I have to take my glasses because I can't see my paper with my glasses on. But I can't see you with them off. It's a problem of old age, it'll happen to you, you'll understand.

The next one is personalization. Assuming that everything people do or say is directed at you. You’re also involved comparing yourself to others. How many of you do that? Personalization, thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you and you're constantly comparing yourself to others. At your age group that is a big self-esteem shaper isn’t it? There are so many people for us to compare ourselves to. Or so many people with shallow attitudes and they think that all of that and they have a tendency to be snobbish and put us down or be judgmental or chatty. You know, and we can feel that. That's not unusual. But when you personalize, hey you really sell yourself short because we have a tendency to see in other people what we don't see in ourselves and we might have it even at a greater degree than they do, but many times that jealously thing kicks in or that fear of judgment thing kicks in. And that's an issue for us.

The other thing here is emotional reasoning. This is a tendency to think that what you feel must be true automatically. And that's the self-fulfilling prophecy, that's what that is. You know, “I think, therefore I am.” If you feel stupid and boring, then you are. If you think nobody's ever going to like you, well you know if you seriously believe it, that's an issue. When I did my self-esteem group yesterday, one of the women says, “You know Dr. Patterson, you, you talk about how to change our distorted thinking. My problem is what I feel I believe. So how can I change it if I believe it?” I mean that's emotional, that's emotional reasoning. Because you come up with enough information to really believe that yeah, you know, my feeling about myself is absolutely true. When it's not necessarily the case. And emotional reasoning is a very, very, very strong because it's hard to convince somebody otherwise if they actually believe that. That they actually believe it. And so that's one of the most powerful – distorted thinking.

The other one here is mind reading. Without evidence, you know what other people are feeling and thinking and why they act the way they do towards you. We're able to read their mind. The problem with mind reading is this: you could be wrong. Most of the time we are. Now there's a little thin line here. We have to rely on intuition. Our sense of other people. That's how we stay alive. That's one of our senses as human beings, our intuition. But we don't necessarily always know how people are thinking and feeling about us because of the way they act. You can't look at a person's face and say, oh God I was talking to so and so and they don't, they don't like me, I saw their face. It could be that they were having back pain, or you know they're having a headache, or you know they just got bad moods, or maybe it had nothing to do with you at all. But since we have a tendency to mind read, especially if we're insecure, we're going to always think it's about us. And that's not necessarily a good thing.
Another one here is control fallacy. Now there are two different types of control fallacies. There's external control, which has you helpless, a victim of faith. People who are externally controlled have a tendency to feel depressed. They don't feel like there's anything I can do about it. So why try? People that are internally controlled, I love these people. These are the people pleasers. The internal control people, these are the ones that feel like they're responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around them. So they very rarely ever say no, they're always volunteering. They're the person that's on that committee and this committee that does this and does that, because they never, ever, ever, ever say no. They're the person I described as someone in the family that's always helping out. When that's the best roommate, the one that's always going the extra mile for you, that's an internal control fallacy. Because they're avoiding conflict, and they have a tendency not be able to say no because they really, really want to be liked.

And the other one is “should.” And there is a “should” in every distorted thought. But people who have a list of “should” have iron-clad rules about how they and other people should be and should act. When people violate those rules, it makes them angry. People that have all these rules, you know one of the things I've found is there've been a lot of people in my life that have rules that I have violated that I never got the rule book. They never told me what the rules were. So they expect me, a lot of people expect you to be able to read their minds, because they'll say something like, you should have known. And I know I'm smart, but I don't have x-ray vision. You know, I don't have ESP, I do have ESPN. I cannot figure it out. Talk to me. You know so I can't read your mind. Communicate. You know, “shoulds.”

You got to think about the rules you have for yourself. Oftentimes we have all these rules and expectations for ourselves, and when we don't meet or match those rules, we judge ourselves down. And sometimes our rules, often times, many times, the rules are just unrealistic. They're just too big. They're just too much. You know I'll talk to a client and they'll say, I'll say well that's a pretty petty rule you have there. Why is it okay for other people not to be perfect, but you have to be. Oh you understand, I got to be perfect. I mean that's just who I am. Oh wow. So are you saying you're better than other people? No, no, no. I'm not better than other people, I'm just better than other people, and you know, that's who I am. That's a rule. I've got to be that person. I'm good at everything I do. I cannot tolerate the fact that I don't know what it is I want to do with my life. I just heard this one the other day. Said well how old are you? 20. Hello. When I was 20 I normalized that most 20 year-olds, even the ones that act like they know what they want to do and where they're going with their life, really don't know and that's normal. And that most people change their major four to six times and change their career eight times, that it's okay because we're constantly changing. Americans change their spouses at least 50 percent of the time. I mean hey. We are a changed culture. You know. So the fact that we don't is normal. What we have to do is look at our rules, look at how we set ourselves up. Look at how we set our relationships up with these rules, because just because it's your rule, doesn't mean someone else should have to have it, and or honor it or respect it. And so it's really, really important to look at the rules you have for yourself that might be affecting the way you see yourself.

The last page is what's called reframing page. What I'm talking to you about now is something called cognitive reprogramming. It's from the school of Cognitive Behavioral Psychology. This is also known as rational psychology. Rationally motor cycle therapy. But the whole idea here is to first, the first step in
switching your self-esteem is identifying that you are a distorted thinker. The second step is knowing those distorted thoughts well enough that you can hear them when you have them. And how did you become alerted to have them? Because you use your emotions as a barometer, or as a signal to you that probably something distorted is going on in your life. And what would be some emotions that would tell you that? Anger. Depression. Sadness. Anxiety. Frustration. Those are all normal emotions that, yeah, probably a good chance that something distorted is going on. So the question you want to ask yourself is, “What’s going on with me right now that might be fueling this emotion?” And can you think about a situation or event in your life that might be a causal factor in your feeling the way you do? Then what you want to do is identify the emotion at the top. You want to describe the precipitating situation or event. You want to record what happened. Then you want to record your thoughts about the situation. And then you want to list the distortions that took place. Once you do that then, you want to identify a sentence that contains the distorted thought. And then you want to create other alternatives for that thought. Okay.

The way it basically works is you have an activating event. And those events lead to beliefs. And you can have two different types of beliefs. You can have a rational belief, or you can have an irrational belief. If you have a rational belief, it leads to a rational consequence. If you have an irrational belief, it leads to an irrational consequence. The irrational consequence would be anger, jealousy, depression, anxiety, frustration, sadness. Because most of the time it’s based on “should.” It’s based on a big show. When I am frustrated it’s because I “should” have gotten it by now. It “shouldn’t” be this difficult. You know, why did they make, why do they write these directions so damn complicated. They should have somebody dumb like me write them so that anybody like me can understand them. That’s what gets me frustrated. I’ve got a time limit in my mind.

I think I should have been able to figure this out in four minutes on how to program this VCR and now I’m ready to throw this doggone thing away because I am pissed. Right? And now when my wife walks in the room, I say, “What the hell you looking at?” She said, “What’s your problem?” Now we got a fight going. Why? Because I’m distorted. Why am I distorted? Because something violated one of my rules. I’m angry. I projected it onto that and now it’s on. Has that ever happened to you? That’s how distorted thinking works.

When you can say to yourself, “Okay, I need to take a few more times, a little bit more time, let’s take a deep breath.” You know this is an area for you that’s difficult. Maybe you should call somebody to help you out. Maybe you should take a break. Maybe your wife should do it, you know. Whatever. That’s a reframe. It’s looking at it differently. You know, she says, “What’s going on?” You say, “Honey, I’m having, I’m just a little frustrated. I’m having a hard time here. Would you be willing to assist me?” That’s rational. Because many times when we’re having distorted thoughts, especially based on our “shoulds,” it leads to other areas in our life.

I can remember when I first, and I tell this example all the time. I first moved to Chico, that was back in 1982. Chico was really a little smoky town. There were 24,000 people in the town. I went to Safeway and you know I’d go to Safeway and people in front of me would buy their stuff. I mean I’d go to the 7/11 Safeway up there on North too. And the people would buy their stuff at 7/11 Safeway and I know
those of you that are familiar with that they just got alcohol and chips, right. Because you can't get any real food there. You want some real food at Safeway, you got to go to the others. But anyway. I'm at the 7/11 Safeway, and all the other people going through the line, no ID. I come up to the, lady ask me for ID and it consistently happened. So I'm from South Central LA, first thing I'm thinking, okay, the reason why they ask me for my ID is because I'm black. Okay now I'm really pissed. So the person waiting on me's prejudiced. Now I got an attitude. Toss my ID up there. You know I leave, speed off in the parking lot. Go home, angry. And then I started to apply what I already know here. So what's another reason why they may, might be asking you for your ID, Pat? It could be that they have to ask every so many customers. It could be that they don't know me in this small town of 24,000 because I just moved to town. It could be the amount of money I'm spending. Who cares why they're asking for the ID? Your ID. All you want to do is buy your Tide and your hot dogs and your chips and go home and eat. You don't have to let this person asking you for your ID whatever the reason, ruin your day. So as a result, I'm like have a good day, hi, hi, hi. Move on. Get in my car, drive home, no harm, no foul, no problem, not almost having an accident. No almost beat up the next person that says something to me. All these things that I have an attitude about. And I share that about me because I'm sure many of you can relate to that. How we let something take control for us and it takes over our life.

And I can remember I saw the movie “Urban Cowboy” with John Travolta. Ain't going to lie. I had to have me some of them cowboy boots, right. So you know, black man looking for cowboy boots in LA, right? So I, I find those cowboy boots cream with the lizard tip. [ Laughing ] Oh, that were pointed and everything. Got home, I was already married. Got home, I was at my mom's house because it was Christmas, I was in graduate school, I was going to University of Maryland. My mother was, says, she says, you can kill roaches with those shoes. [ Laughing ] Then my sister bagged on me really hard about those shoes. At that point, take the tip, I don't want to wear the boots anymore. And I've got a problem with it. Because they violated one of my rules. The rule that I had is you should say, “Really nice boots, I love those, Pat.” The other rule is that I want my mother and my sister to agree with me. That wasn't the case. When they didn't I got a little attitude with them. I didn't want to wear the boots anymore. You know it was stupid. But that's just another example of how distorted thinking can shape and affect us.

Any questions? I want to remind you that anytime you have someone who's a so-called expert, take advantage of them. Ask questions. Whether it's your professors, because you're never going to ever, ever have an opportunity. This kind of opportunity in life where you're going to get free consultation. So if you have any questions, please feel free to ask me. Is this helpful? Okay. I want you guys to have a wonderful life. Good luck, God bless you and have a happy Thanksgiving.

==== Transcribed by Automatic Sync Technologies ==== 