



CONTINUING EDUCATION THAT MAKES A CHANGE

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When you are done with the course, take the posttest. When you pass the posttest (70% or higher) and pay the course fee (\$10 per unit), you will be issued a CEU Certificate of Completion. Enjoy!

Course Name: Life's Law #10: Understand what you want
Course Number: LL#10
CEU: 1.0
Instructor: Philip Copitch, Ph.D.

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. You will study Life Law #10.
2. You will read real life examples of how to work with angry young adult patients.
3. You will study ways to keep defensive walls down.
4. You will experience story telling as a therapeutic tool.
5. You will see ways to open up a discussion with a teen or young adult patient.

SUGGESTED PREREQUISITE COURSES

None

Introduction

I have developed ten life laws that I teach to teens and young adults to help them navigate the rough waters of young adulthood. I have found, over the years, that these life laws give my patients directional posts that guide them outside of our therapy sessions. It is my intent for the young adult to have a framework to build their social skills on. I tend to “teach” one life law a week. (Based on the individual’s abilities.) I find that my patients quickly begin to implement change and self control into their lives. In this CEU course we will look at Life’s Law #10: Understand what you want.

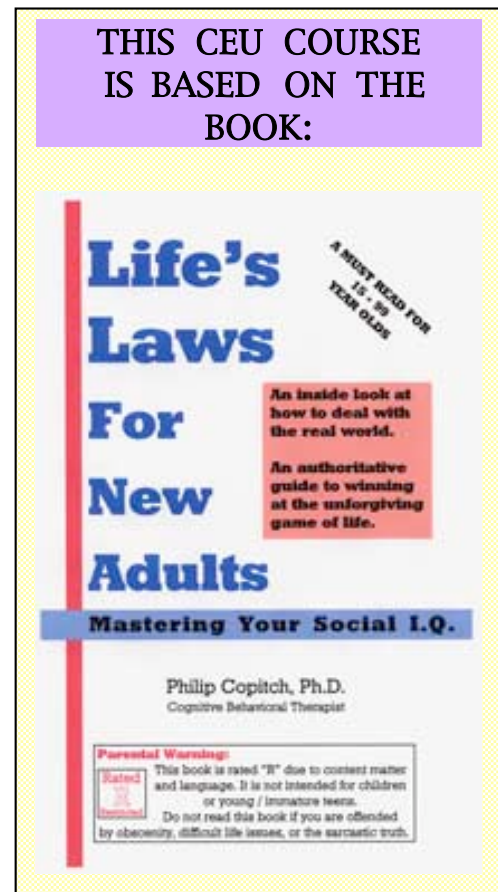
In my treatment of angry and “misunderstood” teens and young adults I take a cognitive behavioral approach and find that they appreciate my nonjudgmental frankness.

We are going to look at how to get teens and young adults to listen to you in an open-minded way. The goal is to talk with your patient, not at them. This sounds easy, but unfortunately it isn’t. Over the years I have found that if I explain a needed concept to someone in a relaxed story format, it keeps their defensive walls down and lets them emotionally participate in the learning process. By sprinkling my conversation with humor and a little “I think it’s like this, what do you think?” humility, I find that my teen and young adult clients readily play off my stories and seriously challenge their own ways of dealing with their world.

The following is the way I sum up the first nine Life’s Laws for patients. It is a dose of reality concerning desire and choice. New adults need to understand that the more they work towards their goals the better chance they have of getting to their goals. The old line, “The harder I worked the better my luck got” is a truism. But, it is important that our goals are really what we want. I start with a story.

Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.

Albert Einstein



LIFE'S LAW #10: UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT

Ben was an all-American seventeen year old. His father was a doctor and his mother was a talented party planner. Life was pretty good for Ben's family. They had a nice house, three nice cars, a vacation cottage by a lake, and good friends. Ben's mother and father were worried about Ben.

His mother summed it up this way:

Ben is a great kid. He is never in trouble, well a little pot and talking back, but he is a good kid. He is respectful and caring. I can't believe I'm even talking to a therapist. Ben is a great kid! But, he is ... how can I say it? I'll just be blunt. Ben's lazy! That's it, lazy to the core. He always has been. He just doesn't care about making something of himself. He would watch TV 'til his eyes fell out if we let him. He is a smart kid, but he just gets by with C's. He refuses to do any homework and he still gets good grades on his tests. The boy is just lazy.

When I met with Ben I asked him what he wanted most in his world. He thought about it a moment and then his face lit up with enthusiasm.

Ben: I want a 1952 Daimler-Benz 300 SL Gull-Wing. It has to be silver with a tan leather interior. It's the best car ever made. It's a work of art and fast as hell.

Dr. Phil: How come?

Ben: It's cool. It's the greatest car on the planet. In its day it won every major race in the world. It has doors that open like wings!

Dr. Phil: So how come you want the coolest car ever made?

Ben: I want to drive it around and show it off.

Dr. Phil: Show it off?

Ben: That's right, I want to tool on by school and show everyone that I have

Most high achievers are persuadable rather than teachable. They tend to be open minded to new ideas, but they are very cautious from whom they take ideas.

made it. That I won.

Dr. Phil:

Won?

Ben:

It probably sounds bad, egotistical and all, but if I had the 300 SL Gull-Wing, I would be the coolest kid in school. Other kids would kill to hang around me.

Dr. Phil:

Other kids would be impressed?

Ben:

Absolutely. Even if you don't know about cars you would know that this car was the greatest.

Dr. Phil:

Ben, I don't understand ... do you want the car, or do you want to be the coolest kid in school?

Long pause.

Ben:

I never thought about it ... I guess I want to be popular at school.

Dr. Phil:

What would being popular at school be like for you?

Ben:

I don't get what you're saying here. I don't even like most of the kids at my school.

Dr. Phil:

I'm not talking about you liking them, I thought you were talking about them liking you?

Ben:

I guess.

Dr. Phil:

What would it be like if the kids at school liked you?

Ben:

It would be a lot easier. We would say "hi" in the hall. We would do stuff together, I guess.

Dr. Phil:

It sounds to me what you really want the most is to have a few friends and more fun in your life.

Ben:

That's not wrong, is it?

I'm using my talk with Ben to illustrate that it is hard to really know what we want out of life. I was very impressed with Ben. He showed an amazing amount of insight about himself. The above conversation and realization tends to take six to eight therapy sessions for most young adults. When asked what we want, most of us think of "stuff" that will fix our lives, then get around to realizing the "stuff" is outside of ourselves. It is nice to have, but it doesn't truly make us feel happy or safe.

Life Law #10 is about truly knowing yourself. A Chinese proverb goes, *If you don't know where you are going you are already there*. It points out the importance of knowing your destination. If Ben had spent the next twenty or thirty years of his life working towards getting to a life position where he could afford such an expensive car, he most probably would not be happy with his purchase. Once he got the car, his life would probably not change all that dramatically. People would not applaud him when he got out of his snazzy auto. And, he would have the added pressure of wondering if he was liked for himself or for his money.

Ben's life started to change over the next six months. He decided it was important to him that he had friends and that he enjoyed being around people with similar interests. Ben worked on learning how to build friendships. Ben got choosy about who he befriended. Ben started to enjoy his days at school for the first time in his life. He decided that he wanted to work with people and that he thought it might be rewarding to become either a physical therapist or an emergency room doctor. Interestingly enough, when Ben started thinking about his desire to help people, his grades went up. All of a sudden he was interested in getting into a good college and learning about how he could help people. Once Ben had a goal, he figured out how to reach his goal.

The last time I saw Ben and his mother was at Costco. He was very excited when he told me that he was going to Mexico with a church group to help build a medical clinic. His mother told me, "My Ben is such a good boy. I used to worry about him all the time, I guess I was just being silly." Ben was buying a case of bug repellent for his upcoming trip.

Lots, if not most people, get transfixed on an object that they want. They tell themselves that they will truly be happy if they get the perfect house, perfect job, or lots of money. This is bull. Research shows that Lottery winners are no happier than the general population. If they were happy before their newfound wealth, then they were happy after the windfall. But, if

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you too, can become great.

Mark Twain

they were bummed before, they were found to be bummed millionaires after the money arrived. You cannot buy happiness, you can only rent it. Rented happiness is short-lived and not real. (Not only new adults have this insight limitation.)

When it comes to your goals you need to be specific, but not too specific. Sounds contradictory? If your goal is to be a professional basketball player, well that sounds great ... unless you are five feet in all directions. As I stated before, you may be a great basketball announcer or a great sports writer or an accomplished athletic trainer, but you are not making it in the National Basketball Association. You are stuck with the limitations the gene pool gave you. If your world orbits around pro B-ball, you need to be there. Finding your niche is what is important.

Actions are choice

The next small paragraph tends to take many sessions for new adults to get their thoughts around. We have a tendency to write plans and re-evaluate them every few weeks. Often young adults are afraid to define what they want. Specifics make their dreams seem less obtainable. Therapeutically, dealing with this fear is very important.

If you have a goal, it limits your choices and forces behaviors. For example, if you wish to join the Army, you're forced to watch your weight and complete high school. I spend a lot of time asking, "What actions will get you towards your dream?" I love talking about actions. Actions are choice. Actions are personal power.

Earn

It is OK to want and to dream and to pray as long as you take your thoughts and turn them into action. In life you earn your way. Whatever your goal is you cannot simply take it. It is not given to you, you can't luck into it, you must earn it. The ten Life's Laws give you the foundation it takes to earn your goals. Once you have defined what you want, build your plans and make it happen. You have a limited amount of time on this planet, don't waste it—not even a little. Enjoy being you to the fullest. As I have said a few times already, process counts. Make the process of your life count! Do well, make yourself proud.

Life is either a daring adventure
or nothing.

Helen Keller

People can learn and grow

It is important to leave the patient with the understanding that they personally can learn and grow. I advise patients to take notes between sessions of their observations concerning life laws. This gives the patient much more than my time with them.

POSTTEST

When you're ready, take the posttest to obtain your CEU certificate. Your test consists of 5 multiple choice or true/false questions per Continuing Education Unit (3 CEU course = 15 questions).

