

Can We Control the Behavior of Others or Only Influence It? PCT, Interpersonal, and Other Perspectives

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International Association for Perceptual Control Theory Conference
Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA
12-13 October 2018

Introduction

This paper focuses on Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) perspectives concerning whether we can control the behavior of others or only influence that behavior. Areas discussed include William T. Powers views and their implications, related views of other scholars, seemingly effective ways of affecting the behavior of others, and interpersonal aspects of doing so.

As the following indicates, whether you can control or only influence the behavior of others depends upon how you look at control and influence – that is, what level of analysis and what definition of control you are using. As a result, rather than get into endless discussions about whether you can or can't control the behavior of others, this paper highlights the idea that whatever view you favor, some methods of affecting the behavior of others seem more effective and preferable than others.

What is “Control”

Powers’ (PCT) Definition and Related Views of Control

According to Bill Powers, the definition of “Control” is as follows:

“CONTROL: Achievement and maintenance of a preselected perceptual state in the controlling system, through actions on the environment that also cancel the effects of disturbances.” (Powers, 2005, p.296)

This is a definition at the Sub-Personal Level of analysis and explanation concerning the processes of how an individual person’s nervous system operates.¹

¹ Such levels of analysis and explanation are discussed in Appendix 1 of Pfau, 2017, pp. 299-300. They range from considering minuscule things such as genes and cells, to broad concepts such as countries and their policies. Although the different levels of explanation can help us to understand human behavior better, problems sometimes arise when people attempt to apply concepts and terms that are applicable at one level to phenomena at another level.

According to Powers:

“I think it can be shown that the idea of controlling behavior—one’s own or that of other people—stems from an old but incorrect assumption of human nature, incorrect because it fails to recognize the control-system properties of human nature.”

“Control of [other people’s] behavior...is simply inconsistent with the facts of human nature.” “People cannot get inside each other’s brains to operate the control systems there, and those control systems are what cause behavior.” (Powers, 1973, p. 271; also, Powers, 2005, p. 283)

“The only way in which one person or any group of persons can control behavior successfully...is to comprehend completely the effects of what they do on each person’s intrinsic state...” “However well-intentioned he may be, no person is wise enough to be able to control the behavior of other people without creating intrinsic error.” (Powers, 2005, p. 281)

“With respect to the natural organism, the only way to control it is to get control of the means for satisfying its intrinsic state.” (Powers, 1989, p. 44)

“Arbitrary control of the behavior of one person to suit the goals of another person ignores the goals that are already governing the behavior of the other person, and inevitably creates conflict.” (Powers, 2005, p. 272)

“People control their own experiences. The only way you can truly force them to behave as you wish is through the threat or actuality of overwhelmingly superior physical force—and even that’s only a temporary solution unless you throw them in a cage or kill them.” (Powers, 1988-2004, p. 122)

This idea, that you can’t really control the behavior of others (without using force, coercion, or controlling intrinsic needs) is consistent with the views of Maturana and Varela, two scholars from Chile, and their concept of autopoiesis. According to them, we are autopoietic beings – self-producing systems who continually maintain the living structures of our bodies and, by doing so, survive.

“Some of your characteristics as an autopoietic being are these:

- What you do at any given moment depends on your internal organization and structure at that time. It depends on internal chemical processes, for example, between neurons, and between neurons and muscles.
- The outside environment may trigger what you do. It may set into motion reactions on your part. But it does not cause you to do certain things or behave in specific ways. It does not specify what you do. What you do is determined by how you are structured and organized internally, not by outside events or objects.

- Focusing on neurons, for example, “Another way of saying this is that the structure of the nervous system at a particular time determines both what can trigger it and what the outcome will be,” according to John Mingers, *Self-Producing Systems*, 76.”
(As summarized by Pfau, 2017, p. 7)

Maturana and Poerksen express similar views:

“Structure-determined systems — human beings — can only be controlled in a limited way; one can perturb them but not control them.” (Maturana and Poerksen, 2004, p. 177)

Such views indicate that we cannot control the behavior of others without using force or related means such as coercion, since (a) what a person does depends on the internal organization and structure of his body, and (b) given our limitations as human beings, we do not fully understand the structure, organization, and processes of another person’s body including those of its many control systems at any particular moment. However, we can sometimes trigger actions of others that correspond to what we want—actions that help us achieve perceptual states that we desire.

Other Definitions and Views of Control

Other popular views of control are at a different level of analysis. For example, definitions of control in the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* and in popular dictionaries include:

“**control** *n.* **1.** Authority, power, or influence over events, behaviors, situations, or people....” (VandenBos, 2015, p. 247)

“¹**control**...*vt.*...**2 a:** to exercise restraining or directing influence over : REGULATE **b:** to have power over: RULE, and ²**control** *n.* **1 a:** an act or instance of controlling; *also:* power or authority to guide or manage... **c:** the regulation of economic activity esp. by government directive – usu. Used in pl. <price ~s> **2:** RESTRAINT, RESERVE.... *syn* see POWER (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1991, p. 285)

“**control** NOUN **1**...The power to influence or direct people’s behaviour or the course of events. VERB **1**...Determine the behaviour or supervise the running of. ‘*he was appointed to control the company’s marketing strategy*’”
(<http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition,/control>, 5/31/2018)

These definitions are at the Person/Individual Level of analysis and concern the whole person and his or her actions. Descriptive terms used at this level include authority, power, influence, regulate, and rule. Most indicate a dominant right or ability to affect other people’s behavior and some include the idea of influence. This level of thinking and discussion differs from the level of PCT analysis and Powers’ definition of control, which deals with processes of the nervous system that affect a person’s actions and resulting perceptions. Such differences of perspective and thinking can lead to endless discussions – something that this paper acknowledges but seeks to avoid.

What is “Influence”

A PCT definition of “influence” does not seem to exist. However, popular definitions at other levels of analysis are many and include these:

¹influence...*n*... **3 a**: the act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command... **4**: the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways: SWAY.... **²influence** *vt*... **1**: to affect or alter by direct or intangible means: SWAY **2**: to have an effect on the condition or development of: MODIFY *syn* see AFFECT” (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1991, p. 620)

“**influence** NOUN **1**...The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.... VERB...Have an influence on. ‘government regulations can influence behaviour, but often without changing underlying values and motivations’ ” (<http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/influence>, 5/31/2018)

These terms seem to imply more indirect methods and less use of force, domination, command, or authority when affecting the behavior of others when compared to the definitions of control mentioned before at the Person/Individual Level of analysis.

The Problem of Conflict

According to Powers:

“The primary cause of conflict between people is the attempt by some people to control the behavior of other people. It doesn’t matter whether the means are nice or nasty. Nobody knows so much about the internal organization of another person that it is possible to dictate a behavior, or lack of behavior, that will not disturb something the other is controlling, and thus call forth opposition. (Powers, 1998-2004, p. 101)

“attempts to control behavior arbitrarily...accomplishes nothing in the long run but to produce conflict and consequent pathology. What do I mean by *arbitrary control*? I mean attempts to make behavior conform to one set of goals without regard to other goals (and control systems) that may already be controlling that behavior....” (Powers, 2005, p. 271)

“Conflict is an encounter between two control systems.... In effect, the two control systems attempt to control the same quantity, but with respect to two different reference levels. For once system to correct its error, the other system must experience error. There is no way for both systems to experience zero error at the same time.” (Powers, 2005, p. 266)

“human beings ...cannot be arbitrarily controlled *by any means* without creating suffering, violence, and revolution.” (Powers, 2005, p. 282)

However, Powers does acknowledge that arbitrary control is sometimes the only solution in an emergency situation -- such as stopping a child from running into a street that has oncoming cars.

Mansell, Carey, and Tai (2013) clarify the meaning of arbitrary control:

“Arbitrary control is an attempt to control an experience (e.g. feelings, thinking, routines, other people) in a way that disregards the conflict that this attempt at control will create with other important goals (Powers 1973; 2005; Mansell 2005).... A good example of when it takes place between people is trying to control another person for your own ends regardless of their wishes – coercion and manipulation are examples.” (p. 49)

And so, according to PCT, the problem with attempts to control behavior arbitrarily is that without full knowledge of what another person is controlling, trying to control the others person’s behavior to suit your references may cause conflicts with other control systems of the person. That is, if the person does what you want, his or her actions may conflict with other important references that he or she has, causing stress and dissatisfaction due to the error signals produced. Also, if other references of the person are more important than references related to doing what you desire, the person may not cooperate. Or the person may only do what you want if coerced in a way that he or she is forced to choose between your reference and one that is even less desirable (as, in Rwanda, when the threat to “kill or be killed” was used to have people kill others; or when President Trump used the threat of imposing “secondary sanctions” on companies doing business with Iran – sanctions designed to punish foreign companies that do business with Iran by not allowing them to do business with US banks or financial institutions (Mironko, n.d.; Dreazen, 2018).

What are Desirable Alternatives?

Control Theory Perspectives

If attempts at trying to control behavior arbitrarily often generate conflicts, what are better approaches? Here are some views of Powers and others, based on control theory:

“It is not so much a matter of what to do with a person...as it is a matter of getting ‘what I want and you want’ to match.” (Robertson and Powers, 1990, p. 159)

“The best A can hope for is to get B to behave in ways that satisfy A’s goals without preventing B from satisfying his own. This situation is most readily achieved by telling B what is going on and trying to get B’s cooperation. In return, of course, A will have to agree to modify his goals and behave as B wants, provided that A can still achieve his higher-level goals.” (Powers, 2005, p. 274)

“Another approach A might try is to alter B’s perceptions, to create preselected errors that B has to correct with the behavior that A wants.” (Powers, 2005, p. 274)

“Negotiation is the main alternative to controlling others.” (Powers, 1998-2004, p. 102)

Pfau, in a paper presented to the IAPCT/CSG at its 2017 conference suggested that:

- *“When seeking to change a person or group’s behavior, first try to analyze the present condition of the following PCT components concerning behavior you wish to influence or change:*
 - (a) The Input Function and Related Perceptions (what is perceived)
 - (b) References (preferred states, goals, purposes, desires,)
 - (c) Error Signals (and their importance)
 - (d) The Output Function (behavior selection and abilities).
 - (e) Feedback (external and internal feedback perceived)
 - (f) Environmental Disturbances and Other Influences (triggers; barriers; opportunities, information, instruction, tools needed, social support,).
- *Then consider to what extent and how each of the above should be changed so that desired perceptions and related references are achieved. Keep in mind that, to avoid conflict, the desired perceptions and related references should be compatible to both the change agent and the target person or persons being influenced.”* (Pfau, 2017b, pp. 17-18)

Marken and Carey suggest that:

“A Golden Rule from a control perspective would be: do unto others as they would have done unto themselves, or, treat other people the way they want to be treated.” (2015, p. 145).

Consistent with these ideas, Maturana and Poerksen point out that:

“When we analyse what the gurus and the successful salespeople actually do in the course of their manipulative activities, we realise...that they always operate with a special understanding of the structures of the systems which they perturb. They exploit the properties of the systems, e.g. the character traits of humans, their desires and needs, and with their insights they are able to trigger some behaviour in the other people which serves their own interests.” (p. 74)

To do the above in a non-arbitrary manner, we need to find out what the other person’s important goals, wants, interests, and other related references are. Interestingly, Dale Carnegie, the author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (first published in 1936 with over 30 million copies sold world-wide²) has provided a number of suggestions for doing so – suggestions that seem

² According to Wikipedia, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”, downloaded 11 June 2018 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_to_Win_Friends_and_Influence_People. Wikipedia also indicates that in 2011, Carnegie’s book was number 19 on *Time Magazine*’s list of the 100 most influential books.

consistent with PCT's emphasis on needing to satisfying other people's goals. Let's look at what he wrote.

Dale Carnegie's Ideas About Influencing Behavior

Dale Carnegie, in his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1986), indicated how to influence the behavior of others in ways consistent with PCT views of non-arbitrariness. For example:

- “The only way...to influence other people is to talk about what they want and show them how to get it.” (p. 33)
- “Let's try to figure out why they do what they do.” (p. 17)
- “Be a good listener.” (p. 93)
- “Show respect for the other person's opinions” (p. 134)
- “There is a reason why the other man thinks and acts as he does. Find out that reason.” (p. 170).
- “*Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view*” (p. 175)
- “The effective leader should keep the following guidelines in mind when it is necessary to change attitudes or behavior:
 - “Concentrate on the benefits to the other person.”
 - “Consider the benefits that person will receive from doing what you suggest.”
 - “Match those benefits to the other person's wants.”
 - “When you make your request, put it in a form that will convey to the other person the idea that he personally will benefit.” (p. 246)
- “Make the other person happy about doing the thing you request.” (p. 247).

An Example of Non-Arbitrary, Respectful Influence

An example of non-arbitrary, respectful influence on the behavior of others seems worth mentioning to help emphasize the importance of taking other people's references and perceptions in mind.

When resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, “President Kennedy was determined to consider the position of the antagonists, Premier Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders” according to Fisher (2017, p. 322-324). Apparently, according to Fisher, Kennedy found much of his negotiating stance in a book he had reviewed in 1960 called *Deterrent or Defense*, by the British military analyst Basil Liddell Hart. Hart wrote:

“Keep strong, if possible. In any case, keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes—so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding.” (Hart, 1960, pp. 247-248)

Robert Kennedy, the President's brother, wrote that "The FINAL LESSON of the Cuban missile crisis is the importance of placing ourselves in the other country's shoes. During the crisis, President Kennedy spent more time trying to determine the effect of a particular course of action on Khrushchev or the Russians than on any other phase of what he was doing" (Kennedy, 1969, p., 124).

Negotiation and Compromise

Following up on Powers' idea that negotiation is the main alternative to controlling others, let's take a closer look at this approach which seems to be more widespread than many of us realize.

Like Powers, William Glasser thought that negotiation is a desirable and even needed way to affect the behavior of others. For example, he wrote:

"Keep in mind, those who follow, who seem as if they are being controlled, do so only as long as following satisfies them." "In the end, human beings have only ...negotiation and compromise, through which to work out a way to live in harmony." "We have no power to make others do...anything that they believe does not satisfy them." (Glasser, 1984, pp. 40, 44, & 171).

Similarly, Chris Voss, a specialist on negotiation, wrote that:

"Life is negotiation. The majority of the interactions we have at work and at home are negotiations that boil down to the expression of a simple, animalistic urge: *I want.*"

"Negotiation serves two distinct, vital life functions—information gathering and behavior influencing—and includes almost any interaction where each party wants something from the other side."

"Negotiation...is nothing more than communication with results. Getting what you want out of life is all about getting what you want from—and with—other people." (Voss, 2016, p. 17)

An intent though is not to just "get what you want." It is also to maintain good relationships with others by avoiding unnecessary conflict. The basic principles for successfully engaging with other people, according to Malhotra and Bazerman, two other negotiation specialists, is to engage with them as people who like yourself are usually well-intentioned human beings, but who have different interests and perspectives (Malhotra and Bazerman, 2007, p. 302).

Let's also keep in mind that Powers wrote:

"I think we very seldom want to control someone else's behavior; what we want is certain consequences that affect us to occur." (Powers, 2008)

Given that there are often many ways that certain consequences can be produced, we should not become fixated on only one way of behaving to achieve outcomes that we desire.³ That's where negotiation is useful. Negotiation is a way of agreeing on an approach that is acceptable to all or most of those involved—not just to you or another person or group seeking to affect the behavior of others.⁴

And so, how can and should we negotiate? Chriss Voss, the negotiation specialist mentioned before, has provided some good advice—similar to that of Dale Carnegie and others using respectful approaches towards influencing the behavior of others. For example, Voss pointed out that:

“While we can't control other's decisions, we can influence them by inhabiting their world and seeing and hearing exactly what they want.” (2016, p. 84)

Voss suggests that, after hearing “No”, that we ask solution-based questions or say something such as the following:

“What about this doesn't work for you?”
“What would you need to make it work?”
“It seems like there's something here that bothers you.”
“What about this is important to you?”
“How can we solve this problem?”
“How am I supposed to do that?” (2016, pp. 79-80, 154, 181)

He calls such open-ended questions “calibrated questions” and writes:

“When you ask calibrated questions...you are leading your counterpart to your goals. But you are also leading them to examine and articulate what they want and how they can achieve it...pushing them toward a collaborative solution.”

“One can only be an exceptional negotiator...by both listening and speaking clearly and emphatically; by treating counterparts—and oneself—with dignity and respect; and most of all by being honest about what one wants and what one can—and cannot—do. Every negotiation, every conversation, every moment of life, is a series of small conflicts that, managed well, can rise to creative beauty.” (2016, p. 243)

Other negotiators have similar ideas. For example, Fisher and Ury (2011) write:

“The ability to see the situation as the other side sees it...is one of the most important skills a negotiator can possess.” (p. 25)

³ The terms desired consequences, desired outcomes, and desired perceptions are used interchangeably in this paper.

⁴ With this in mind, it seems that negotiation is also the basis of democracy.

“Ask their advice.... Apart from the substantive merits, the feeling of participation in the process is perhaps the single most important factor in determining whether a negotiator accepts a proposal.” (p. 30)

A recent discussion on csgnet provides an example of negotiation during daily life – an example that focuses on Power’s idea that “we very seldom want to control someone else’s behavior; what we want is certain consequences that affect us to occur.” Bruce Nevin mentioned a household with two people and one car. Person A wanted to use the car to go to the beach; Person B wanted to use the car to go grocery shopping. Their proposed behavior of both using the car at their same time was in conflict. What was the solution? After a brief discussion, they focused on their higher-level references (i.e., go to the beach and go to the grocery store) and Person A said “Oh, well, the beach isn’t that far. I’ll ride my bike. Could you pick up some beer for me at the store”⁵—a win-win, negotiated agreement reached by conferring and discussing.⁶

Mutual Respect and Love

Abraham Maslow discussed ideas of synergy and love that are related to the idea of living in harmony rather than in conflict with others. Quoting Ruth Benedict, he stated:

“societies where non-aggression is conspicuous have social orders in which the individual by the same act and at the same time serves his own advantage and that of the group.... I shall speak of cultures with low synergy where the social structure provides for acts that are mutually opposed and counteractive, and cultures with high synergy where it provides for acts which are mutually reinforcing.... I spoke of societies with high social synergy where their institutions insure mutual advantage from their undertakings, and societies with low social synergy where the advantage of one individual becomes a victory over another, and the majority who are not victorious must shift as they can [my italics].” (Maslow,1971, p. 194)

“The synergy concept can also be applied on the individual level, to the nature of interpersonal relationships between two persons. It makes a fairly decent definition of the high love relationship.... Love has been defined variously as if your interests were my interests, or as if two hierarchies of basic needs were pooled into one...or as if my happiness rested upon your happiness.” (Maslow, 1971, p. 200)

Similarly, Humerto Maturana and Bernhard Poerksen write about love, respect, and cooperation. For example:

“Whenever we see a relational behavior through which another arises as a legitimate other in the domain of coexistence...we speak of love. As such, love is a manner of

⁵ From discussions by Rick Marken and Bruce Nevin titled “MOL and peace work”, July 7 and 11, 2018, on csgnet@lists.illinois.edu.

⁶ To negotiate is defined in a Webster’s dictionary as “--vi. To confer with another so as to come to terms or reach an agreement. --vt...To settle or arrange by conferring or discussing....” (*Webster’s II*, 1994).

relating.... The other is given a presence to which we relate with respect.” (Maturana and Poerksen, 2004, p. 197)

“Ethics is based on love.” (p. 208)

“Love is the emotion constituting democracy. The fundamental features of democracy include human beings – citizens – who respect themselves and each other living together and working together on a project and a form of co-existence.” (p. 200)

“Love is the domain of those relational behaviours that we perform...through which another being that could be ourselves, arises as a legitimate other in coexistence with us. (p. 117)

Related Religious Views

The last quote above overlaps with the “Golden Rule” – a maxim found in many religions where, for example, it is sometimes stated as “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Judaism), “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” and “Do to others what you want them to do to you” (Christianity), “As you would have people do to you, do to them; and what you dislike to be done to you, don’t do to them” (Islam) (Wikipedia, 2018a, 2018 b).

As Jeffrey Wattles states in his book *The Golden Rule*, and fully consistent with PCT and Powers’ views about how conflict results from attempts to arbitrarily control others:

“The golden rule...enjoins us to take into account others’ interests, needs, tastes, wishes, desires.” (1996, p. 126)

Just as relevant is the principle that some call the “Platinum Rule” of “doing unto others, wherever possible, as *they* would be done by” (Wikipedia, 2018a) and Marken and Carey’s Golden Rule mentioned before: “Do unto others as they would have done unto themselves, or treat other people the way they want to be treated” (Marken and Carey, 2015, p. 145).

Changing Behavior in Organizations

These ideas, including those about arbitrary control, seem to apply to organizational change too. For example, Capra and Luisi, two systems thinkers, state that:

“It is common to hear that people in organizations resist change. In reality, people do not resist change; they resist having change *imposed on them*.” (2014, p. 316)

“A machine can be controlled; a living system can only be disturbed.... There is no need to push, pull, or bully [an organization] to make it change. Force or energy is not the issue; the issue is meaning. Meaningful disturbances will get the organization’s attention

and will trigger structural changes...in power relations, changes from domination and control to cooperation and partnerships....a shift from coercive power....” (2014, p, 318)

In addition to the techniques indicated before, such as respectful listening to peoples’ concerns, needs and interests, other more formal techniques can be used to help reach goals and objectives better within organizations. For example, Mager and Pipe suggest an approach for analyzing performance problems and Pfau indicates a way of assessing training needs.

According to Pfau (2007), if a person needs to do a task or achieve a goal in an organization but doesn’t know how to do it, then a training or learning need exists.⁷ Formal techniques for determining such needs according to him include (a) looking at the organizations goals, objectives, problems, and future plans, (b) considering job tasks involved, and (c) determining what the individual or group members want and need.

Mager and Pipe’s approach is broader. They provide a flow chart to help consider a variety of factors that may affect what you might do to achieve desired outcomes. These include determining (a) whether the desired outcome is really important enough to do anything about, (b) whether a simple “fast fix” can be applied, (c) whether doing or achieving what you want is punishing to those involved,⁸ (d) whether present behavior to be changed is rewarding,⁹ (e) whether there are any consequences at all to the person for doing what you want,¹⁰ (f) whether a skill deficiency exists, (g) whether the task can be simplified to make it easier to do, (h) whether other obstacles exist, and (i) whether the person has the potential to do what you want (Mager and Pipe, 1997).

Whichever approach is used, the basic idea is not to act arbitrarily but to make sure that you and other change agents consider the situation from the perspective of the person or persons involved so that mutually acceptable ways are used to achieve desired outcomes.

Conclusions

To summarize, major conclusions that can be drawn from what has been presented seem to be:

1. (a) “Yes,” we can apparently control the behavior of others – sometimes at least (for example, by physically stopping someone from doing something and by arranging disturbances so that the behavior you desire is produced by a person achieving perceptions that are important to that person),

⁷ In PCT terms, we can say that an error exists between perceptions of what a person is achieving, doing, or can do and the reference for that behavior or outcome. If the error can be reduced by increasing the person’s knowledge or skills, then we say that a training or learning need exists.

⁸ In PCT terms, this means considering whether what you want them to do produces error signals.

⁹ In PCT terms, this means are the references involved in doing the behavior important enough to the person to perform the behavior that you desire. That is, is achieving what you want important enough to the person to do what you want.

¹⁰ In PCT terms, are any of the person’s references achieved or error signals avoided.

- (b) “Yes,” we can only influence the behavior of others but not control it – since you can trigger behavior, but what a person does ultimately depends on the processes of his or her internal control systems and body.
- (c) “Yes,” both of the previous statements, (a) and (b), cannot be correct, and
- (d) “Yes,” all of these statements are correct – depending on the basis of your thinking and reasoning.

And so, rather than endless discussion, we focused on the implications of PCT and related thinking about how to affect the behavior of others effectively, without causing unnecessary conflict and alienation.

2. Although arbitrary attempts to control the behavior of others may sometimes be appropriate, such attempts should generally be avoided due to the conflict, resentment, and resistance that often results.
3. Rather than fixating on specific behaviors that you want to occur, consider the outcomes that you want to achieve, since there are often many ways to achieve an outcome. Doing so increases your flexibility in deciding on an approach acceptable to both you and others involved.
4. Respectful attempts to influence the behavior of others should dominate what we do. Such attempts include:
 - (a) Trying to see things from the other person’s point of view.
 - (b) Keeping the consequences that you desire in mind and being flexible in agreeing on the behaviors used to reach those consequences.
 - (c) Agreeing on an approach that is mutually acceptable and advantageous.
5. Such respectful attempts and PCT thinking seem to be in keeping with religious, ethical, and other moral views concerning human relationships – that is, how to interact with other people without producing conflict. In addition, we can apparently say that PCT provides a neurological explanation for religious, ethical, and moral thinking as to why others should be treated with respect and love!

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