

The root cause – emotions not behaviours

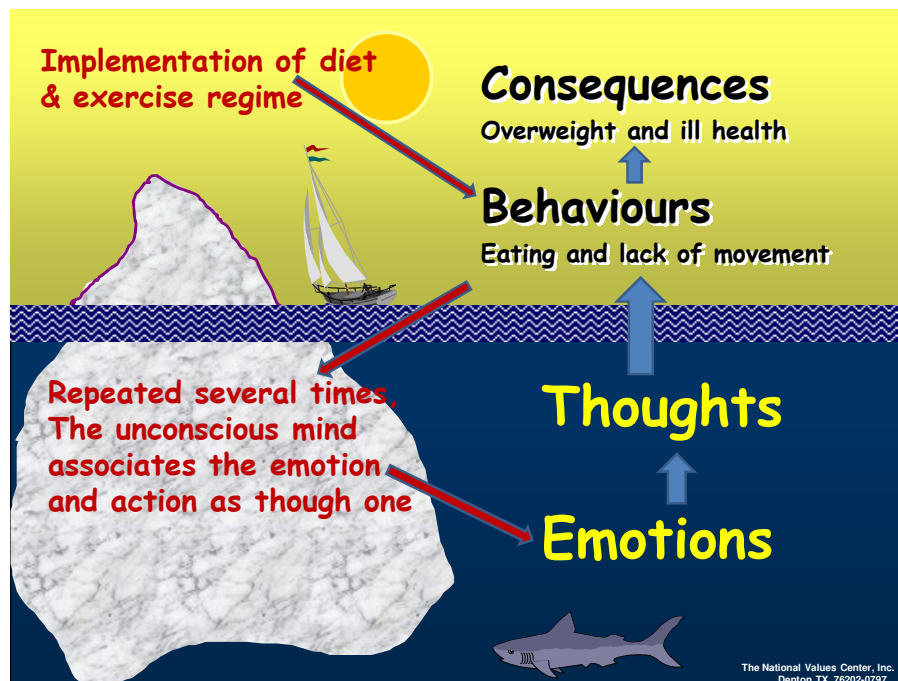
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As our lives become more inactive due to cars, computers and the fear of gyms, to name but a few factors, its vital people eat healthier and find ways to move more. However, when we look at the statistics it is frightening to see how few people really change or maintain a healthy lifestyle for any considerable time. We have to ask ourselves, how do we create lasting change to solve this personal and societal, epidemic.

Many approaches to health and wellbeing are still segmental when in fact the human body is a unitary system with the mind and body being inseparable. Traditional approaches aim only to address the behaviour of an individual by implementing change with food and/or movement rather than the root cause (fig 1.) of the problem, emotions and thoughts which ultimately drive the behaviour.

The iceberg analogy (fig. 1) outlines the importance of getting to the root cause, the emotions/thoughts. Studies have shown how hard it is to change a behaviour, Paul Chek noted that it takes 300 repetitions to create a habit and 3500 to 5000 consistent repetitions (if you run the old habit just once, you have to start over) to change an old habit (Chek 2002). If this is even half true, how many people are going to consistently run the new habit successful at a conscious level and not give in to temptation? What is needed is an approach that has an impact at the fundamental level and influences the emotions and thoughts that drive an individual, consciously or unconsciously, to behave in the way they do. If change is made at this level then behaviour can only follow.

Fig 1.



The brain is highly complex and will associate events and behaviours when the emotions are strong enough. When you hear the song to your first kiss/date do you feel set emotions? The brain has associated the music and the emotions. The same happens any time strong emotions occur alongside a specific behaviour like eating a box of chocolates when you feel lonely and sad. Each time you experience the feeling of loneliness or sadness in the future you will crave that box of chocolates and likewise those specific chocolates could cause you to feel lonely or sad. Unless the emotions are addressed and understood, the behaviour of eating chocolates will never go for good.

There are many approaches that help people move forward from these associated emotions, everything from conscious decisions, neuro linguistic programming (NLP), time line therapy and counselling to acupuncture and hypnosis.

It could be deduced from this that there is no point in simply working with food and movement as it all happens at the level of the brain/mind. However, as previously mentioned, you cannot split the mind and body. The body does influence the mind and so working with healthy eating and movement, in conjunction with emotions and thoughts is paramount. When the body is static and/or unhealthy food choices are made, the body is compromised from a nutritional point and this has knock on effects to energy levels and emotions. The neural networks run the entire body from muscles to memory so anything that influences one influences the other. It is for this reason we must educate people on the importance of addressing the entire body and help people create life changing strategies to health and fitness.