

The Pursuit of Outcomes  
Ken Caselden, LPCC/LCADC  
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We operate day to day from our individual set of internal maps (thinking habits, interpretations, and assumptions/values) as well as our sensory experiences. And although nothing truly happens without our brain's permission, how many times have you heard someone reference the way he or she "feels" about a given circumstance, relationship, or behavior by referring to a thought, perspective, or conclusion rather than a feeling? "I feel like I can never get ahead" or "I feel like there's not enough time in the day," for example. Indeed, we have feelings but too often we reference them in the name of a thought pattern leading to the identification of a problem.

Problems, or the perception of problems, lie within the context in which we think and ultimately assign meaning to specific conditions, circumstances, and relationships. Feelings are influential, of course. While outcome inhibitors such as doubt, bitterness, resentment, and the like expel ourselves away from our desired wants and needs, outcome advancers such as trust, faith, confidence, and competence leap one toward a virtual reality of possibilities and the achievement of goals.

While most people seek guidance or answers to their problems, frequently people also seek to discard or invalidate the very answers, insights, and skills often gained within personal and professional settings. For instance, therapeutic models ranging from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Solution-focused Therapy, Reality Therapy, and so on, although extremely effective in a wide variety of common and complex issues, can be met with resistance when not presented from within context of the answer already existing within one's self through the combination of both thought and feeling. In other words, specific advice or new ideas bare few fruits when one has little to know basis on relating personally and meaningfully to the input received.

Our minds are constantly receiving, processing, and transmitting messages at ridiculously fast speeds – say 200 mph – from both conscious and subconscious levels. Redirecting those messages, whether through therapeutic models, deep prayer, meditation, hypnosis, yoga, or guided imagery essentially involves identifying what personal change is desired followed by persuading yourself that you can obtain, and likely have already experienced through your lifetime of experiences, the very set of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors necessary to achieve your goals. Outcomes, in other words, are determined at the psychological level.

One quote closely pertaining to this perspective comes from Mahatma Gandhi. It reads, "A man is but the product of his thoughts – What he thinks he becomes." Organizing your frame of reference toward the outcome you wish to obtain has every bit to do with the message and language you communicate. It doesn't stop there, however. It takes more than just "I can," "I will," and "I am." One must unite thinking patterns with the feeling or outcome to be experienced. Take the phrase, "I think I would like to try making a little progress." Where is the outcome and what is the feeling? Would like? Try? A little? Progress? Thinking in terms of being specific, sensory, and aimed at identifying your personal resources, gained from your lifetime of experiences and learned lessons, directly ties thought and feeling to the quality of results.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What do I want?
- What is the outcome I am after?
- How could I know I was getting my outcome – what would I hear, see, feel?
- Is there any other time I have heard, seen, or felt this before, perhaps in another context?
- When do I want the outcome?
- What will getting the outcome do for me?
- How will it change my life?
- What stops me from having the desired outcome right now?

So you don't like your current circumstances and/or relationships. Or perhaps you do but seemingly find yourself wandering what else is out there. How would you even know what you had obtained when you can never have enough of what you don't want? We cannot change the outcomes of the past. What we can do, however, is change how we apply our resources, insights, and strengths gained along the way to create meaning of what has happened, what is happening, and what is desired. Only then can we manipulate our present. Only then can we attract our future.

Ken Caselden, LPCC/LCADC, is a sole owner and Professional Counselor in private practice at Freedom Wellness Center, PLLC. Ken provides therapeutic support using a variety of interventions including cognitive-behavioral therapy, neuro-linguistic programming, reality therapy, mindfulness, and clinical hypnotherapy. His specialty areas include mental, emotional, and substance use disorders, domestic violence, anger management, men's issues, PTSD, and attachment/bonding. He can be contacted by visiting [www.freedomwellness.org](http://www.freedomwellness.org).