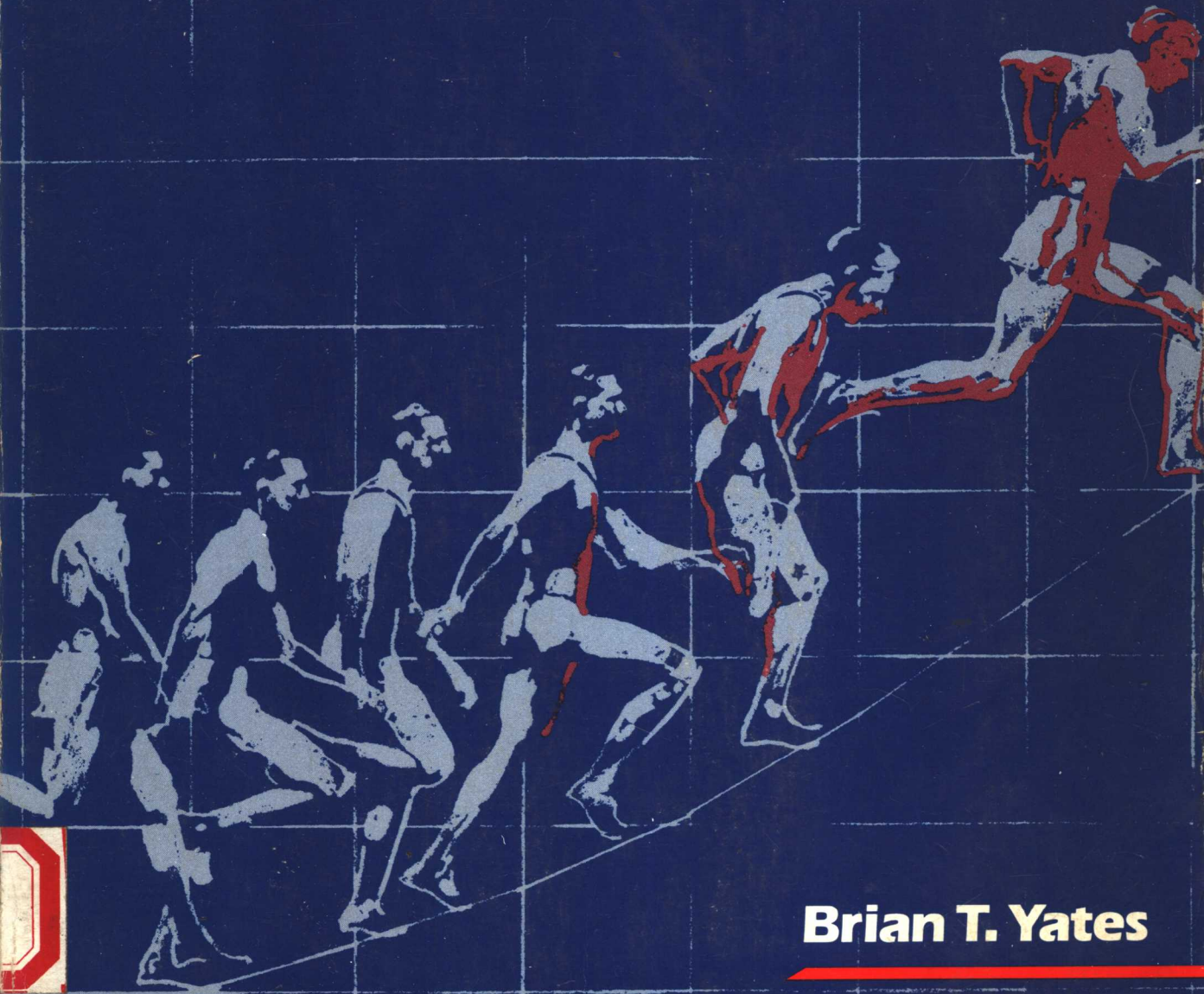


Applications in Self-Management



Brian T. Yates

APPLICATIONS IN SELF-MANAGEMENT

Brian T. Yates

The American University

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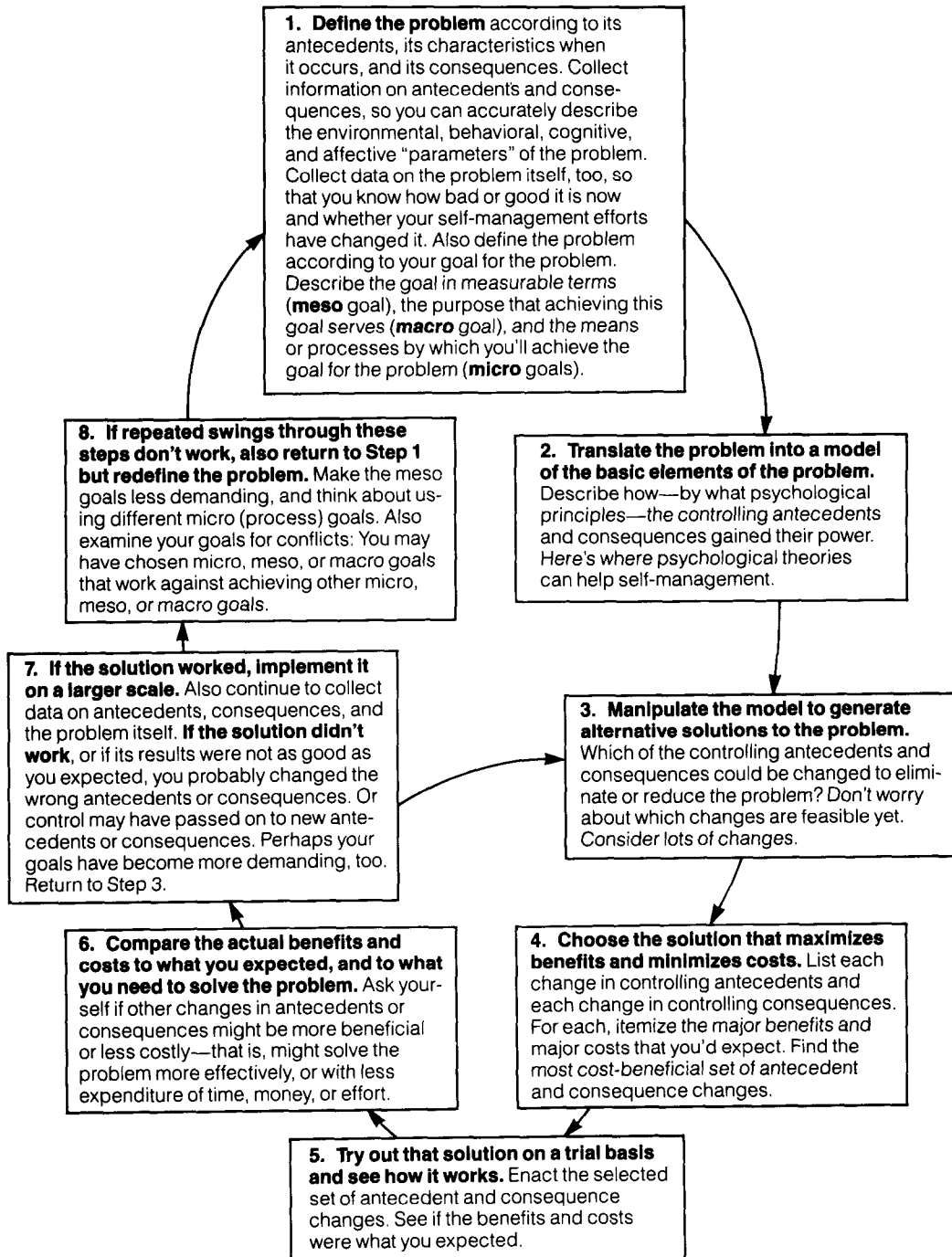
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STEPS IN META SELF-MANAGEMENT



Preface

This book shows students how to use psychological techniques to solve personal and interpersonal problems and to achieve life and career goals.

The fifteen chapters describe how behavioral and cognitive techniques can be applied by the individual for better time management, improved home and family life, superior study habits, clearer writing, weight reduction, other eating disorders, exercise, sleep problems such as insomnia, smoking cessation, problem drinking, prevention or control of other drug abuse, shyness, forming new relationships, enhancing or ending relationships, assertiveness, preventing and alleviating moderate depression, anxiety and fears, getting a job, success in a career, saving money, conserving energy, and getting professional help for problems that are too big to manage by yourself. Numerous projects from my own self-management courses are used throughout to illustrate the application of techniques to different areas.

This book was written to be both substantial enough to be used as the primary text in a course on personal adjustment or self-change, and diverse enough in the areas covered to be a secondary text or readings book for courses in counseling, health psychology, behavior modification, self-improvement, paraprofessional training, and clinical or community psychology.

After covering basic behavior and cognitive techniques, the steps in conducting a self-management project are detailed all the way from defining specific goals to preventing relapse. Subsequent chapters are devoted to the most common and most important areas of self-management. I hope you find this book both enjoyable and useful; careful planning has gone into the design of each chapter. At the end of the book is a form for giving me feedback.

Any book is the result of many people's efforts; in this small space I can acknowledge only a few. The many students who have taken my self-management course made this book possible by encouraging me to continue teaching the course and by telling me that a single, comprehensive text was needed. Their self-studies enrich this book immensely. Several graduate students supplied useful comments on earlier chapters, but Gary Brosvic was especially helpful in spotting everything from typos and grammatical slips to factual errors. My self-management of writing this book was facilitated by knowing that he would be reading and correcting what I wrote.

Establishment of the Self-Management Institute at the American University helped me translate many of my early ideas about self-management into concrete procedures that wound up in this book. Several graduate students contributed time and effort to getting the institute going and deserve my special thanks. Linda Hurley's work with me on the Smoking Management Division of the Self-Management Institute taught me a great deal. Mitch Hugonnet, Betsy Cobrin, and Nadia Kuley worked hard to establish the Sleep Management Division. I'm also indebted to Mitch for the case illustrations of self-managing sleep disorders. Gary Reich and Becky Petersen were invaluable in helping develop

the Time Management Division of the Self-Management Institute. Carole Hoage supplied criteria for a variety of eating disorders. She and Gary Reich gave insightful comments on the first chapters.

The American University contributed to this book by giving me the opportunity to develop my self-management course and by supplying room to house the Self-Management Institute. The university also helped by awarding me a semester sabbatical to write a major portion of this tome.

I thank Ken King of Wadsworth Publishing Company for being the psychology editor for this book. Hal Humphrey was an efficient and understanding production editor. I'm especially grateful to one of Ken's colleagues, Bob Podstepny, for listening one day to my interest in writing a book on self-management, instead of badgering me to order texts from him. The reviewers of the manuscript improved its style and substance. They are: Esther Cohen, University of the Pacific; William H. Clover, United States Air Force Academy; Richard Rakos, Cleveland State University; and Arthur Resnikoff, University of California, Irvine.

Finally, I thank Bonnie for waiting to play until after I finished writing for the day, and Jan for taking care of Bonnie while I wrote.

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Introduction

Understanding Self-Management

Paul quit smoking—and has stayed off cigarettes. Angie realized that if she rented the apartment she wanted, she'd have trouble keeping within her budget, so she opted for sharing another place. Steven studied diligently and was accepted into a prestigious medical school. Eileen maintained her business's profitable position despite increased competition and her return to school for a college degree. What do Paul, Angie, Steven, and Eileen have in common? They all used *self-management* successfully.

Self-management can bring about

- Alleviation of a problem you now have
- Prevention of a problem, often by resisting temptations
- Achievement of a cherished goal, or
- Prevention of erosion of an achievement

That's a lot more than most people think of when they hear "self-management." Most figure that you're talking about learning to inhibit desires for things (like double helpings of mint chocolate chip ice cream) that may bring you pleasure now but can cost you pleasure (through fewer dates, a less pleasant image in the mirror) later. Self-management is that, but it can be much more. Self-management can also be self-"realization": the creation or enhancement of positive behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, and the reduction or elimination of negative ones. The methods of self-management can be used to keep your calories down, sure, but they also can help you find new friends, get a raise, or choose and prepare for a successful career.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Self-Management

Who actually is responsible for *doing* this “self”-management? *You*, of course. No one can do it for you. Before your hopes wane, though, realize that you can get a little help from this book, from friends and professors, or from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychiatric social worker. These sources can make the difference between what’s happened before when you’ve resolved to begin a diet or study more, and what’s going to happen when you *self-manage* while reading this book.

You might wonder whether self-management is really *self*-management, or management of you by factors like your parents or professors. Much has been written on this topic (e.g., Bandura, 1981, 1982; Mahoney, 1974a), and the debate about whether self-management originates in the *self* or in your social or physical environment continues. Let’s settle on a compromise and start *doing* self-management.

Sure, our physical and social environment controls what we say and think and do and feel. But we can and do control that environment! Once we learn the particular ways in which a part of the environment controls us, we may be able to change that part of the environment—and thereby change ourselves! Bandura (1981) called this compromise *reciprocal determinism*, because it recognizes that although the individual cannot conduct self-management without regard for how the environment controls him or her, neither can the environment by itself produce or defeat efforts at self-management. Control of our thoughts, feelings, and behavior is shared by ourselves and the environment, and both control each other.

For example, if we want to avoid a temptation posed by the environment, we can avoid the tempting part of the environment. If we want to be more productive or creative, and we know that structuring the environment in certain ways will improve our productivity, then we can make ourselves more productive and creative by restructuring our environment in that way.

And, if we’re not certain about how changing our environment might affect our responses, we can *experiment* with different changes. We also can see how changes that occur naturally in our environment correspond to changes in what we think,

feel, and do. We can collect and analyze information about the way we work, to see how we can behave, think, and feel in the ways we want to rather than in the ways we have to. What you may not have known up to now is how to study yourself—how to collect information about your thoughts and feelings, how to discover what controls them, and how to change the environment so it changes you the way you want. This book teaches you that.

We are, then, inevitably controlled by our environment, but we can control much of it and, through it, much of ourselves. There is no “free will,” but we are not puppets whose strings are pulled by the world around us. At least we needn’t be. We can learn to pull our own strings, to control our own selves, to a much greater degree than most people imagine. The way to do that, though, is to appreciate how much we are controlled by the people and world around us. While reading this book, I hope you’ll come to understand that even more. I also hope you’ll use this book to not just understand, but also to improve yourself in many ways. I have included numerous examples of how my students and I have changed different aspects of our lives. That’s nothing, however, compared to what you can learn from yourself by trying to change even a minor aspect of *you*. Please don’t just read about self-management: *Do* self-management. And don’t stop when you stop reading the book. Learning about self-management is a lifelong process; there’s always something new to appreciate, and there are always more areas of life to self-manage.

Getting Ready for Self-Management: Enhancing Awareness of Your Goals

The first major step in self-management is a thorough awareness of a self-management problem and its causes. This awareness is rarely sudden. As you define your *target response*—what you’re going to change about yourself—you begin to see that particular part of yourself more clearly. As you choose *goals* for the target, you notice relationships between target behaviors, thoughts, and feelings with a fresh awareness of possibilities for control and improvement. As you collect information about the target response and its possible causes, you gain a

clearer understanding of the factors in your present and past environments that have created and maintained the target response. Through this *self-monitoring*, you can find the strings to pull to change the self-management target.

The first thing to do is choose a goal for your self-management study—actually, several goals: (a) a *meso* goal that specifies what behavior, cognition, and/or affect you want to change, how much, and by when; (b) a *macro* goal that describes the general purpose served by attaining the *meso* goal; and (c) a series of *micro* goals that outline the steps to the *meso* goal. Choosing a goal now, before reading about techniques for self-management, may better orient you to self-management and to the distinction between techniques and targets of self-management. Keep in mind, though, that choosing a goal and learning a few techniques usually is not enough to do self-management correctly. There are many more self-management steps, which are covered in Chapter 3; wait until then to begin a major self-management project.

Choosing a Meso Goal: Your Self-Management Target Response

There doesn't have to be anything "bad" about you for you to do some self-management. You could use self-management techniques to improve an area of your life that's already working out reasonably well. You already have a close-knit group of friends? Wonderful! For your self-management project you could expand the range of friends to include people outside your immediate circle. You could even do your self-management project to *prevent* a future problem. And, sooner than you think, you'll graduate and need to get a job. So, how about choosing career management for your project? Even if you have a self-management goal in mind, examine the major areas of your life by using Table I.1. Broad areas of your life may be education, friendships and relationships (including parents and family), employment, and entertainment. To get a better feeling for which areas are most important to work on, fill out the rating scales in Table I.1.

What do your ratings show you? Some people's might indicate that they would like to be more scholarly than they are now. According to their rat-

ings, too much of their life is tied up in personal relationships. Other people's ratings show them to be so involved in school or work that they don't have time for people. Almost everyone's ratings for "Contribute to your life now" are different from their ratings for "Contribute to your pleasure or pain 10 years from now." The last row of Table I.1 (how much time and energy you feel you *should* devote to the different areas) probably shows you which topic to choose for your self-management project. Write a label for the area in the top section of Table I.2, and fill that table out, too. Table I.2 gets you to choose a more specific—a *meso*—goal.

When you set *meso* goals, ask yourself what (a) behaviors, (b) thoughts or cognitions, and (c) feelings or affects you want to change. Suppose you want to be able to press more weight on a weight machine or run progressively longer distances. Those laudable behavior goals probably have affective and cognition *modalities*, too (for instance, positive self-statements).

Making the Macro Goal Explicit

Before embarking on a self-management journey to attain the *meso* goal you've selected, be aware of the *macro* goal that the *meso* goal is serving. You could "win the battle but lose the war" by, for example, rewarding yourself with ice cream for exercising regularly (thereby defeating your *macro* goal of losing weight).

Another reason for making the *macro* goal explicit is that sometimes people aren't aware of the direction they're headed with their project. It's almost as if they had an unconscious goal in mind that they didn't want to acknowledge. For example, one woman began a project to reduce the amount of time she spent on the phone. Later it became clear that she wanted to decrease the control her mother exerted on her life (such as long daily phone conversations). Once the overriding *macro* goal is acknowledged, it's often easier to do self-management projects.

Specifying Micro Goals to Get You to the Meso and Macro Goals

Self-management is more likely to succeed if you are aware not only of the *macro* goal toward which

TABLE I.1. Choosing Self-Management Targets, Part 1

Questions	Areas of Your Life				
	Education	Friendships and Relationships	Employment and/or New Skills	Entertainment	Other (for example, Health)
1. How much time and energy <i>do</i> you devote to this area of your life <i>now</i> ? (1 = none at all . . . 10 = almost all)					
2. How much time and energy do you <i>want</i> to devote to this area of your life? (same rating endpoints)					
3. How much <i>does</i> this area contribute to your pleasure or pain <i>now</i> ? (1 = hardly any . . . 10 = an extreme amount)					
4. How much <i>will</i> this area contribute to your pleasure or pain <i>10 years</i> from now? (1 = hardly any . . . 10 = an extreme amount)					
5. How much time and energy <i>should</i> you devote to this area <i>now</i> ? (1 = none at all . . . 10 = almost all)					

the meso self-management goal is directed, but also of the *micro* goals that must be achieved on the way to the meso goal. Deciding to stop smoking is a laudable meso goal, for example, but just setting that goal has been shown by research to be ineffective. To get off and stay off cigarettes, a variety of micro goals need to be set and met. For example:

1. Set a "quit date" and inform others of it.
2. Discover the times of day (for example, afternoon) and situations (parties, after meals) when you have the strongest urge to smoke.
3. Plan cognitive, behavioral, and affective strategies for defeating the desire to return to cigarettes.
4. Learn how to relax and how to give yourself rewards other than shoving a white cylinder of tobacco and paper between your lips and sucking on it.
5. Establish hearty self-reinforcement contingencies for continued abstinence from cigarettes (see Chapter 9 for more micro goals on smoking).

TABLE I.2. Choosing Self-Management Targets, Part II

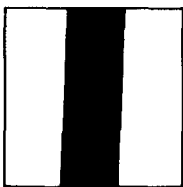
Main area in which you're going to do your self-management project (circle one)	Education Friendships and Relationships Employment and/or New Skills Entertainment Other (for example, Health)
Subareas (for example, Assertiveness, as part of Friendships and Relationships) (Write three or more.)	
Sub-subareas	
Meso goal	

Even these micro goals may not be specific enough to get the job done. You'll probably want to give yourself *micro* micro goals to make doing self-management easier. At this stage of the self-management project, make your goals as detailed as possible (although you should be willing to change them if the situation calls for it).

Anticipating Side Effects

When one goal is established, other goals are often set by default. One of these "default goals" is the side effect. Whether you like it or not, achieving

some self-management goals may have bad (negative) side effects. Stop smoking, for example, and you may find that you eat more. Positive side effects are possible, too, and can be important reinforcers for self-management if you focus attention on them. Ceasing smoking, for instance, may get you seated faster in some restaurants, saves you money, and makes you even more pleasant to kiss. Thinking up likely positive side effects of a self-management project can help you initiate and perpetuate the project. Anticipating negative side effects lets you prevent them or reduce their severity.



HOW TO SELF-MANAGE

**Techniques and Steps for
Better Self-Management**