

# Reality Therapy *and* Self-Evaluation:

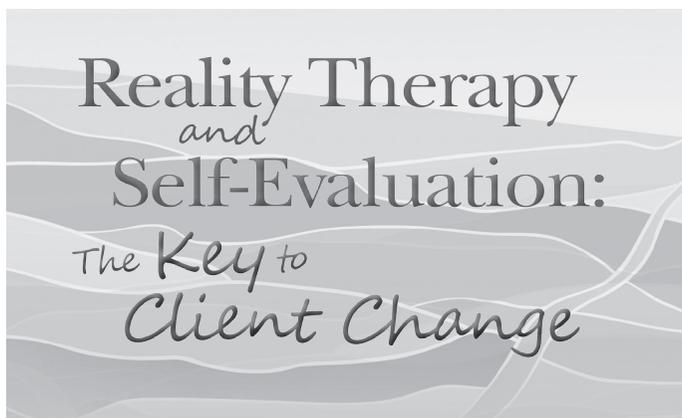
*The Key to  
Client Change*

Robert E. Wubbolding



AMERICAN COUNSELING  
ASSOCIATION

6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 600  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
[www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)



Copyright © 2017 by the American Counseling Association. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.

**American Counseling Association**

6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 600 • Alexandria, VA 22304

*Associate Publisher* • Carolyn C. Baker

*Digital and Print Development Editor* • Nancy Driver

*Senior Production Manager* • Bonny E. Gaston

*Production Coordinator* • Karen Thompson

*Copy Editor* • Kay Mikel

Cover and text design by Bonny E. Gaston.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Wubbolding, Robert E., author.

Title: Reality therapy and self-evaluation : the key to client change / Robert E. Wubbolding.

Description: Alexandria, VA : American Counseling Association, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016048750 | ISBN 9781556203701 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Reality therapy. | Psychotherapy. | Counseling psychology.

Classification: LCC RC489.R37 W8264 2017 | DDC 616.89/14—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016048750>

# Dedication

*To the toughest editor I know, my dear wife Sandie,  
who reviews and edits everything I write. We have been intimate partners  
in writing this book, and we are the closest of friends. Together we have  
made countless friends around the world as we travel to far off lands.  
We are fortunate and grateful to have met and married 34 years ago.  
Long live our marriage, our love, and our intimate friendship.*



# Table of Contents

	Preface	vii
	Acknowledgments	xiii
	About the Author	xv
<i>Chapter 1</i>		
	Human Motivation: “In General Why Do People Do What They Do?”	1
<i>Chapter 2</i>		
	Human Motivation: “Specifically Why Do People Do What They Do?”	11
<i>Chapter 3</i>		
	The Counseling Environment: “How Do I Set the Stage for Self-Evaluation?”	25
<i>Chapter 4</i>		
	What Is the WDEP System?	45
<i>Chapter 5</i>		
	Career Concerns	73
<i>Chapter 6</i>		
	Cross-Cultural Applications	97
<i>Chapter 7</i>		
	Dealing With Loss, Posttraumatic Stress, Self-Injury, Conflict, and Anger	135
<i>Chapter 8</i>		
	Reality Therapy FAQs	189

*Table of Contents*

*Chapter 9*

Conclusion	201
Resources for Further Study	203
References	205
Index	213

# Preface

*“I have been impressed with the urgency of doing.  
Knowing is not enough; we must apply.  
Being willing is not enough; we must do.”*

—Leonardo da Vinci

*“Every person is the best judge of what relates to his own interests or concerns  
. . . errors once discovered are more than half amended.”*

—George Washington



*In classes, training workshops, conferences,* and during supervision, both experienced and neophyte counselors and therapists ask a personal question, “How do *I* help clients make meaningful changes in their actions, their thinking, and their feelings?” They also ask, “How and when do clients change?” “What motivates clients to alter their behavior?” “How can effective counselors elicit or instill in clients a desire or a motive for changing their behavior?” “How can clients better cope in the face of so many onslaughts from the world around them?”

The purpose of this brief and practical book is to provide answers to these questions as well as to help counselors formulate interventions that are useful in an age of short-term, brief counseling. The techniques presented are action centered, cognitive centered, and affective centered. “Self-evaluation” focuses on clients’ explicit and controllable choices, self-talk derived from choice theory, and the emotional component of clients’ total behavior. The neophyte counselor trainee and the seasoned professional can immediately implement the interventions described in this book. Moreover, if this book

stimulates discussion and serves as a catalyst for conversation among professional people, it will, in my view, be successful. This hope does not minimize the value of the explanations. On the contrary, I believe the explanations add to the respect of choice theory/reality therapy (CT/RT) and place it where it belongs—in the mainstream of the profession of counseling and also in psychological theory and practice.

I am not a disinterested researcher who investigates phenomena as a detached neutral observer. Rather, I am an activist and an advocate for teaching CT/RT as a proven and practical system. In my opinion, a wealth of research provides ample support for the practice of reality therapy. Consequently, I am meticulous in my efforts to achieve both accuracy and precision in presenting both theory and practice.

Although these interventions are easily understood, experience has shown that their effective use requires thoughtful reflection and ongoing self-evaluation of their diverse applications by the user. Discerning counselors' habitual use of these skills over time reveals their subtlety and depth. In addition, I believe that these skills are compatible with cognitive counseling, motivational interviewing, narrative therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, Adlerian counseling, and others. This integration does not diminish the fact that reality therapy is a stand-alone counseling system.

Utilizing the skills derived from this book, counselors are able to practice the art of counseling in a more spontaneous and elegant manner. By introducing advanced techniques based on reality therapy as action, cognition, and emotion centered, you can seamlessly integrate them into your own personal style and repertoire of skills. The counselor–client interactions described in this book will trigger additional questions and exploratory statements that fit individual personalities and enhance a wide range of styles. For instance, when implemented properly, the skill of helping clients self-evaluate becomes more than a formula or a cookbook recipe. Developing appropriate self-evaluation skills and interventions requires practice as well as a willingness to undertake a trial-and-error process.

The skills and techniques described in this book include both questions and explorations that appropriately and readily apply cross culturally. I have conducted training sessions in North America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa and trained instructors in countries around the world, encouraging them to make their own culturally appropriate adaptations. These ideas have been received with enthusiasm, and counselors have been willing to adapt them to their own traditions, customs, and language even though this may involve considerable modification. For example, when teaching in Germany,

it became evident that the words *power* and *control* presented difficulties that needed detailed explanations as well as adaptations. Similarly, in cultures characterized by indirect communication (a communication style less assertive than that of many Western people), a softer mode of questioning and exploration is required. My friend and colleague Masaki Kakitani, professor emeritus and counselor at Rissyo University Tokyo, Japan, tells me that directly asking “What do you want?” can sound intrusive. His cultural adaptation—“What are you looking for?” or “What are you seeking?”—is more appropriate for Japanese clients. Rose Inza Kim, professor emeritus of Sogang University in Seoul, Korea, and known as the “Glasser of Korea,” has expressed to me that the same holds true of the Korean adaptation of reality therapy. Many of my books have been translated into Japanese, Korean, Croatian, Hebrew, and Arabic, which further illustrates that indigenous peoples find the concepts useful and appealing to counselors as well as being beneficial for their clients.

Of increasing relevance to the use of reality therapy around the world is the need for the practitioner to be aware of various styles of communication and thus to understand how to adapt reality therapy to individual clients. Michio Kaku (2011) presents a far-reaching observation:

In the West, there is an expression “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” But in the East there is another expression: “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down.” These two expressions are diametrically opposed to each other, but they capture some of the essential features of Western and Eastern thought. (p. 374)

You are invited to interpret this statement and apply it to the theory and practice of reality therapy as you implement the ideas presented in this book.

Chapters 1 and 2 address human motivation: why people do what they do. Human beings possess five genetic, universal needs that are the source of behavior. More specifically, we develop pictures, or specific wants, related to the needs that are unique to each person. Human behavior consists of actions, thinking, feelings, and physiology that spring from our inner world of wants and is an attempt to influence the world for the purpose of achieving need-satisfying perceptions. This statement is clarified in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 3 summarizes specific interventions made by practitioners of reality therapy for the purpose of establishing a safe, warm, and empathic relationship. Chapter 4 constitutes the heart and soul of reality therapy, the WDEP system. This acronym summarizes many direct as well as subtle interventions that are explained and illustrated throughout the book.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present specific hypothetical dialogues. Chapter 5 includes the application of reality therapy to two adults: an employee who is unmotivated and drinks excessively, and a culture-specific lonely client seeking a promotion at work.

Chapter 6 introduces four cross-cultural cases, beginning with a troubled adolescent student, followed by a cultural exploration of wants or goals underlying those initially expressed by the client. The third case describes an adult female with a record of arrests for drug dealing who is living in a halfway house and feels lonely, powerless, and unattractive. The final case is of a young male probationer whose ethnicity is not described, which demonstrates the applicability of reality therapy to all clients regardless of ethnicity.

Chapter 7 contains seven case studies. The first case illustrates the use of reality therapy with an adult couple experiencing tension in their relationship. Subsequent to this case is one of a self-referred woman suffering the loss of her husband. The third case focuses on the posttraumatic stress of a 12-year army veteran. The final four cases illustrate applications to an adult female with multiple diagnoses living in poverty with a history of self-injury and child neglect; an adult male who demonstrates a discrepancy between his stated values and his behavior; an adult female who fears that her career might be in jeopardy because of anxiety that is rooted in a serious loss; and, finally, we revisit a teenage client who is dealing with feelings of fear and anger.

Chapter 8 provides answers to questions about spirituality, the value of expressing reality therapy as the WDEP system, the place of feelings and emotions in reality therapy, and the connection between reality therapy and ethics principles. It also provides the answer to the question, “What is the evidence for the effective use of reality therapy?” The chapter ends with a self-evaluation applied to the professional, with questions for your consideration and criticisms of reality therapy.

Chapter 9 summarizes the central place of self-evaluation in reality therapy as described by its founder, psychiatrist William Glasser (1925–2013).

Specific dialogues illustrate many kinds of direct self-evaluations. For example, the interchange between the counselor and Simon in Chapter 5 includes asking Simon whether he believes that his current work habits are helpful or hurtful in keeping his job. Also, Dr. Phil’s famous question, “How’s that working for you?”, exemplifies a direct inquiry focusing on clients’ self-evaluations. Furthermore, the advanced use of self-evaluation skills includes subtle and indirect techniques. Implicit or indirect self-evaluation such as the use of

metaphors and stories offers additional pathways for utilizing these keys to client change.

I offer four suggestions for your consideration. First, due to the fact that many graduates of counseling programs and licensed counselors work in agencies that identify them as therapists, in this book I use the terms *counseling* and *therapy* interchangeably. However, please note that counseling is not merely an activity; it is an independent profession. Although there are differences between the activities of counseling and psychotherapy, I do not differentiate between the two processes because reality therapy has found a home among a wide variety of mental health workers: counselors, corrections workers, nurses, psychologists, addictions specialists, school counselors, classroom teachers, managers, supervisors, and administrators, to name a few. According to Patterson (1973), “there are no essential differences between counseling and psychotherapy in the nature of the relationship, in the process, in the methods or techniques, in goals or outcomes, or even in the kinds of clients involved” (p. xiv). Nystul (2011) states that “the counseling literature has not made a clear distinction between these concepts, perhaps because the two processes are more similar than different” (p. 6). Nevertheless, if you wish to differentiate between the two, I will not argue the point. Whether you identify yourself as a counselor or a therapist, I believe you will find that you can use the ideas described in this book. In describing the interaction between the professional person and the client, I will, for the most part, refer to the professional person as a “counselor.”

Second, as you read the book, look for surprises and the unexpected, such as the client washing dishes with his mother. Some of the interventions will undoubtedly seem familiar, but others might seem unusual or even startling. There might even be one that dazzles you! When you employ these tactics, you will notice that clients begin to think about their lives in a different way. Frequently, they demonstrate their change of thinking nonverbally. They tend to look up and adopt a hesitating and thoughtful facial expression. If the technique is familiar to you, remember the admonition of the famous British writer Samuel Johnson who observed that we need to be reminded more than we need to be taught. In a like manner, Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “We need education in the obvious more than investigation of the obscure” (as cited in Sowell, 2015, p. 46). In an overstatement, President Harry Truman observed that the only thing new is the history you do not know. If the technique is new, enjoy it, use it as soon as possible, and don’t fret about whether it is old or new.

Third, this is not a book merely about concepts. Included are many examples of dialogues and interactions between counselor and client illustrating a variety of self-evaluations and specific usable interventions. I encourage you to utilize the questions and other interventions in your professional relationships. They may feel awkward at first, but with continued use they will become spontaneous and natural. An important extension of reality therapy counseling is my suggestion that at the end of each session you ask the client, “What was the most useful idea discussed today?” Implementing this simple idea, a question and an answer, requires no more than a few seconds, but it provides the opportunity for clients to evaluate the process and to provide helpful feedback to the counselor. To emphasize the importance of this intervention, I include a question such as, “What was most useful to you in our session today?”

Fourth, be aware that the use of easily understood language is intentional. I have written about self-evaluation with a purposeful focus on the language of everyday living. Very few technical words and phrases are required to explain and learn the powerful interventions defined as “self-evaluation.” Similarly, I hope you will teach these principles to colleagues, clients, families, parent groups, and the public. They are indeed life-changing ideas that, because of down-to-earth language, can be learned not only by licensed professionals but also by people from virtually every background.

Finally, I invite you to contact me with questions, difficulties encountered, and, especially, success stories at [wubsrt@fuse.net](mailto:wubsrt@fuse.net).

# Acknowledgments

*I am forever indebted to* the founder of reality therapy, William Glasser. My mentor died August 23, 2013. I miss his wisdom, his wit, and his unbounded enthusiasm for teaching. Naomi, his first wife, died in December 1992. She was a friend and an enthusiastic supporter of Bill and of the members of the William Glasser Institute. Within a few years, Bill married Carleen Floyd, my wife's best friend, and Carleen Glasser remains committed to keeping Bill's voice alive. During his life, Jon Carlson showed a unique commitment to counseling theory and practice. He assisted many young professionals and pointed the way toward excellence in the world of publishing and counseling. My good friends Jerry and Marianne Corey have always provided encouragement and enthusiasm.

My adaptation of reality therapy to many cultures around the world has been made easy by partnering with John Brickell from the United Kingdom, Leon Lojk from Slovenia, Rose In-Za Kim from South Korea, Masaki Kakitani and Aoki Satoshi from Japan, Kwee Ong, Sister Liz Than, and Evelyn Koh from Singapore, Farida Dias from India, Ali Sahebi from Iran and Australia, Ivan Honey from Australia, as well as students from many continents.

I wish to extend a special acknowledgment to the faculty and students of Xavier University for their support and encouragement. Al Anderson, a professor at Xavier, was a special mentor and friend during my years there; may he rest in peace.

Finally, I cannot pay enough compliments or express my gratitude sufficiently to Carolyn Baker and Nancy Driver whose patience and gentleness are written in the book of life. Working with the entire staff at the American Counseling Association has been a most enjoyable experience.

To those who have died, I say rest in peace. To my many living friends, "Live long and prosper."



## About the Author

**Robert E. Wubbolding, EdD, LPCC, NCC, BCC, IABMCP**, internationally known teacher, author, and practitioner of reality therapy, has taught choice theory and reality therapy in the United States, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa (Morocco). His contributions to the theory and practice include the ideas of *Positive Symptoms*, *The Cycle of Counseling*, *Five Levels of Commitment*, and others. He has also significantly expanded the *Procedure of Evaluation*. He has written more than 150 articles and essays, 35 chapters in textbooks, 15 books, and published many DVDs on reality therapy. His books include *Using Reality Therapy*, *Understanding Reality Therapy*, *Reality Therapy for the 21st Century*, *A Set of Directions for Putting and Keeping Yourself Together*, and *Reality Therapy: Theories of Psychotherapy Series* (published by the American Psychological Association), and he is coeditor for *Contemporary Issues in Couples Counseling* and coauthor of *Counseling With Reality Therapy* (2nd ed., Speechmark, London, UK).

He is professor emeritus at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. His busy professional life includes being director of the Center for Reality Therapy and senior faculty for William Glasser International. He was personally appointed by William Glasser to be the first Director of Training for the institute. In this position he coordinated and monitored the Certification, Supervisor, and Instructor Training programs (1988–2011). Currently, he is also faculty associate at Johns Hopkins University and is a board-certified coach.

Formerly, he consulted with the drug and alcohol abuse programs of the U.S. Army and Air Force. He was a group counselor at a halfway house for women, an elementary and secondary school counselor, a high school teacher, and a teacher of adult

basic education. For 2 years he taught for the University of Southern California in their overseas programs in Japan, South Korea, and Germany.

Professional memberships include Professional Clinical Counselor, Psychologist, member of the American Counseling Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Mental Health Counseling Association, and many other national and state psychological and counseling associations.

His personal mission is to “Keep the flag flying.” His goal is to maintain and expand the system of reality therapy founded by William Glasser, who wrote an introduction to his book and stated, “He is one of my closest and most trusted associates. I couldn’t recommend anyone more highly.”

Whenever he writes, he depends on his wife of more than three decades, Sandie, whom he describes as his best friend, “finicky” editor, and who he says challenges him every day to be the best person he can be.

Awards include the Marvin Rammelsberg Award, presented to a person in a helping profession best exemplifying qualities of friendship, brotherhood, and humanitarianism, displaying exemplary leadership qualities, and making outstanding contributions to professional organizations; the Herman J. Peters Award for exemplary leadership to promote the profession of counseling; the Greater Cincinnati Counseling Association unique Recognition of Merit Award; the Mary Corre Foster Award for exemplifying qualities of leadership within the counseling profession and promoting the standards of excellence within the profession; Distinguished Alumnus Award, College of Education, University of Cincinnati, 2002; Distinguished Counseling Graduate of the 1970s decade, Counseling Department, College of Education, University of Cincinnati, 2005. In 2009 he was given the Gratitude Award for Initiating Reality Therapy in the United Kingdom from the Institute for Reality Therapy United Kingdom. Also in 2009 he was awarded the Certificate of Reality Therapy Psychotherapist by the European Association for Psychotherapy. In 2014 he was honored as a “Living Legend in Counseling” at the American Counseling Association Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. In 2015, the Malta Reality Therapy Association made him an honorary member because of his work in introducing reality therapy to their country. In 2015, he was invited to deliver the keynote address at the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Japan Reality Therapy Association, Tokyo, Japan. In 2016, he received the title “Friend of William Glasser Institute Singapore,” in Singapore. In

2016, he was invited to deliver the keynote address to the first international William Glasser Institute Conference held in Asia, in Seoul, South Korea.

Currently he spends his time teaching reality therapy around the world with his wife, Sandie, and introducing reality therapy to new audiences, cultures, and professions.

