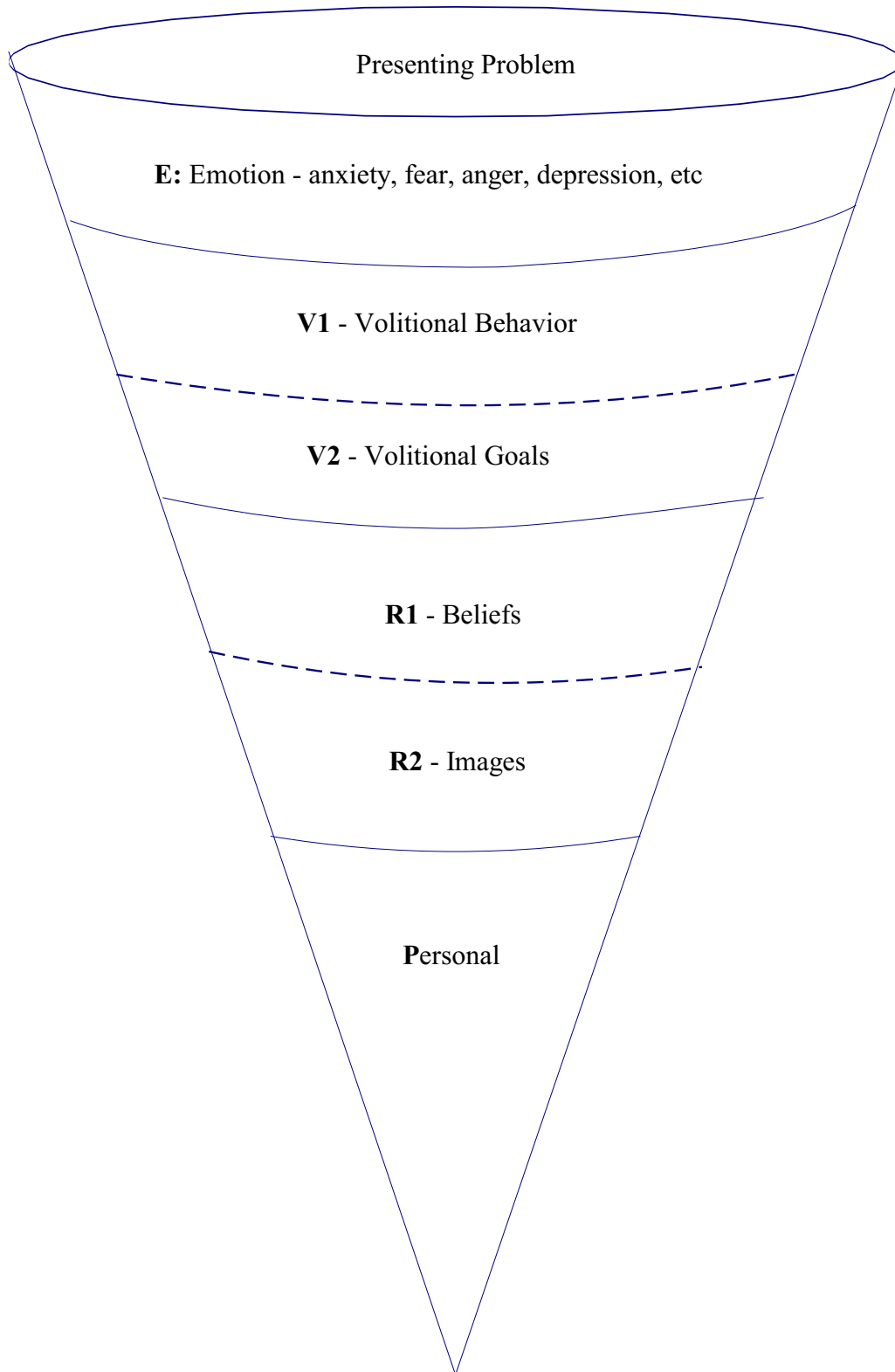
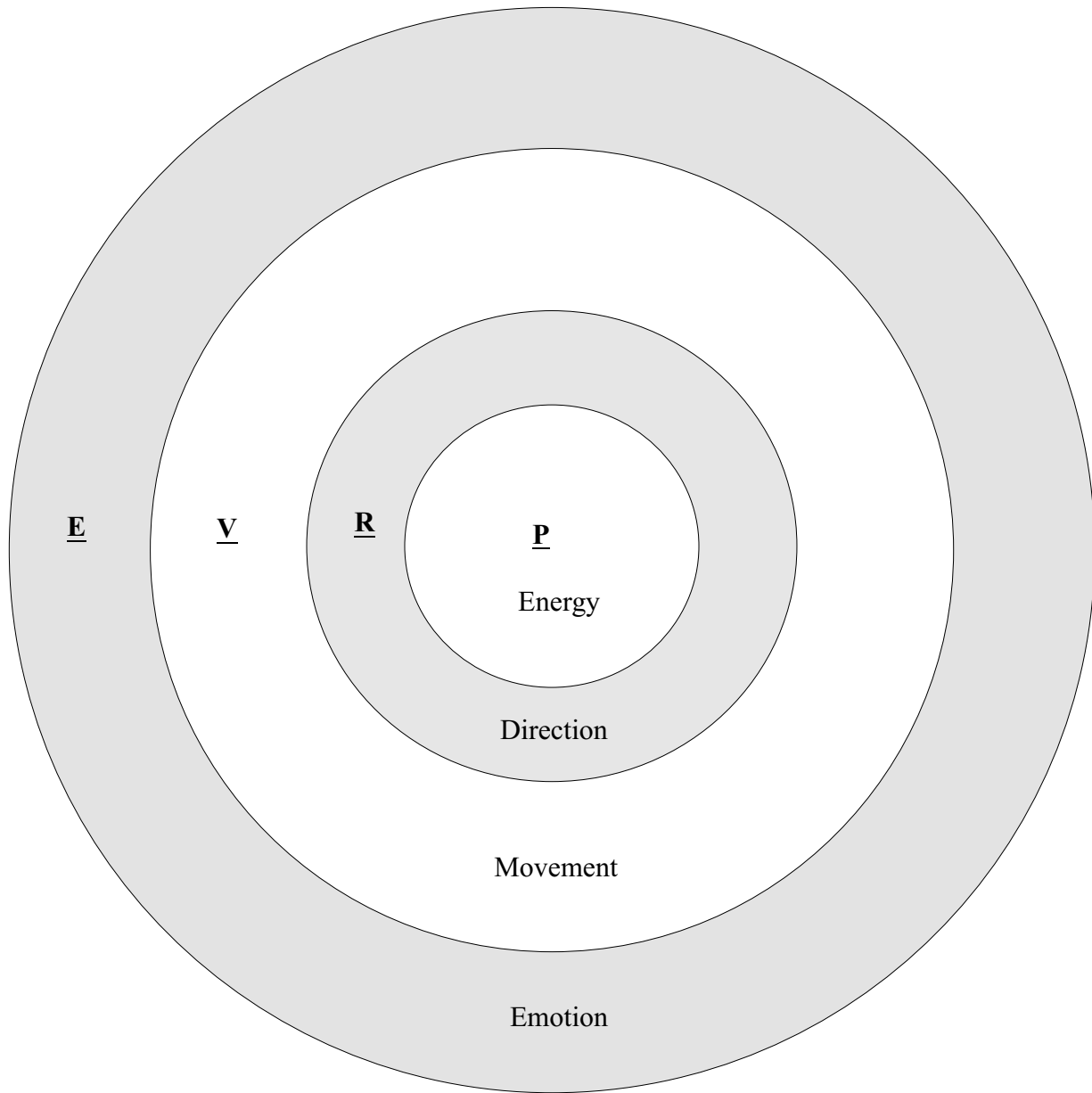


Circle or Layer Theory Diagram

Work from the presenting problem down to the Personal circle



Layer or Circle Theory of Human Nature



Work from the outward inward

E = Emotional

V = Volitional

R = Rational

P = Personal.

Problem Solving using the Layer / Circles Theory of Human Nature

At the center of most problems will be the personal (P) aspect of man that seeks to fulfill his longings in life in some way other than in God and through His methods. This is the foolishness that is bound up in the heart of man starting with childhood (Proverbs 22:15) and continuing into adulthood (Proverbs 12:15; 14:12; 16:25; Jeremiah 2:13). This results in problems in every other area as the person strives to either fulfill those desires or cope with their lack of fulfillment (See the rest of Proverbs for descriptions of the fool and his actions). The quest to fulfill wrong desires and even correct desires by wrong methods results in assumptions about life (R2 - images) which man will find or create rationalizations (R1 - beliefs) to support. rationalize a wrong approach to life based on those wrong assumptions. Wrong images and beliefs result in wrong goals (V2 - Volitional goals) and choices in striving to reach those goals (V1 - Volitional choices).

To summarize: The personal nature of deep longings and desires provides the energy or driving force for which the rational nature develops strategies for fulfilling those desires and so gives the energy direction. Man's volitional nature makes the choices which give movement in the direction set by the rational nature in the effort to fulfill the desires of the personal nature. The results of that movement will effect the emotions which give rise to the presenting psychological symptoms.

The goal of counseling a Christian is ultimately to refine the personal longings and desires to be more in line with dependence and submission to God. The goal of counseling the non-Christian is ultimately to expose the foolishness of their personal longings by pointing out that life can only have real meaning in God and therefore then need to become dependent and submissive to Him.

Personal nature health = longings and desires are bound up in God's will instead of self-will. Some characteristics of personally mature Christians are:

- *A willingness to persevere in difficult times and accept failure when it comes
- *Not being threatened when others disagree or disapprove
- *Being open to admonishment and profiting from it
- *A steadfast determination to live for the Lord in the middle of a crises situation
- *A willingness to continue to serve Christ even when there is a lack of encouragement and efforts fail.

Rational nature health = An understanding that life is about knowing the Lord and doing His will (R2 - images) and his mind renewed through the Word (Romans 12:2; etc.) and having his thoughts held captive by Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) (R1 - beliefs). Some characteristics of a healthy rational nature:

- *Not obsessed by why things happen, but resting in the sovereign control of a loving God
- *More concerned about what the Lord would desire than what he himself would desire
- *A mind filled with Scripture (Psalm 119:9-11), and therefore diligent in personal devotions - prayer, Bible reading, study, memorization and meditation.
- *Pursues truth even when it leads to uncomfortable exposure of wrong beliefs

Volitional nature health = full realization of capacity to choose direction (V2 - goals) and behavior (V1 - behavior) with a steadfast determination to obey and follow the path Christ sets. Characteristics of volitional health include:

- *Makes and accepts both the responsibility and consequences for those choices
- *Does not blame others or forces beyond his control for his choices and behavior
- *Will persevere in the face of temptation, and will confess sins when failure occurs.
- *Rests secure in Christ (Romans 8:1)

Emotional nature health = the courage to acknowledge and fully experience whatever emotions exist at any given moment of time. Such acknowledgment and experience is related to self and God and not in expression to others except as they promote God's purposes.

Characteristics of emotional health include:

- *Full acknowledgment of emotion to God and self
- *Ability to fully experience the emotion without losing control to that emotion.
- *Expression of emotion to others in keeping with promoting God's purposes

A simplified model for counseling

Stage 1: Identify presenting problem (The test)



Stage 2: Identify problem emotion (E)



Stage 3: Identify problem behavior (V)



Stage 4: Identify problem thinking (R)



Teach Biblical commands concerning problem areas (Correction of V, R & P)



Stage 5: Clarify Biblical thinking (R)



Stage 6: Secure volitional commitment (V)



Stage 7: Plan and carry out Biblical behavior (V)



Stage 8: Identify Spirit controlled emotions (E)

Sin may be exposed in stage 3 (V) & stage 4 (R) that will lead to exposure of sinful desires and longings (P) that can then also be corrected through teaching God's word. All of this fits into the dealing with someone who has come to The Test in the counseling flow chart and has either already disobeyed or is coming for counsel because they do not want to disobey. You expose the sin or potential sin so that they can either repent from or prevent the sin by a greater understanding of and commitment to the Lord.

Obedience & Growth



The Test



Disobedience
And
Conviction



Confession and
Repentance

Stage 1: Identify presenting problem. This may or may be obvious. If you are intervening, you already know the problem you want to address. If someone is coming to you for counsel, begin by finding out what specific help they are looking for. This will save both of you a lot of time.

Stage 2: Identify problem emotion (E). The presenting emotion is often a key to the goals a person may have. Anger and resentment are often indicators of blocked goals. Inadequacy and inferiority indicate an unreachable goal. Guilt indicates trying to reach a goal in a manner that is view as unacceptable by the person. Anxiety, worry and fear indicate either an uncertain goal or the fear of failure.

Stage 3: Identify problem behavior (V) Find out what goals the person has set are the source of the emotions. It is often helpful to find out when the problem emotion first began since this will often expose the goal-oriented behavior.

Stage 4: Identify problem thinking (R) Identification of the goal-oriented behavior and goal will limit the range of basic assumptions the person might hold. The effort is then to expose the assumptions underlying the goals and behavior. This can be done by asking questions and/or making suggestions to which the counselee will agree or disagree. Exposure of the assumptions will in turn expose the personal longings and desires of the person. Exploring the person's past as to when they first set their goals, started thinking in their current manner may be helpful in exposing their underlying assumptions (images) and personal longings.

Teach Biblical commands concerning problem areas (Correction of V, R & P). Biblical truth must be brought to bear upon the situation, the behavior, the goals, the thinking and the underlying assumptions and personal desires.

Stage 5: Clarify Biblical thinking (R) Some helpful suggestions for doing this:

- A. Try to identify where the wrong assumptions were learned, since a belief because less rigid when its source is also exposed.
- B. Encourage the person to express his emotions surrounding the belief since a person who feels understood becomes more relaxed to accept new thinking / beliefs / goals and less defensive to hold to the old thinking / beliefs / goals
- C. Give the counselee encouragement and support (1 Thess. 5:14) because giving up long held assumptions / beliefs will feel personally threatening
- D. Teach them to fill their mind with Biblical precepts to train their mind to new beliefs and thought patterns.

Stage 6: Secure volitional commitment (V). The person must recognize that they have a choice and that they must make that choice to behave in keeping with what they have acknowledge as true regardless of how they feel. R & V control instead of E

Stage 7: Plan and carry out Biblical behavior (V). Make specific plans in the steps that will be taken to renew the mind (R), and do what is right before God (V).

Stage 8: Identify Spirit controlled emotions (E). Point out that the counselee will change from sin-related feelings to "spiritual feelings" as they behave according to Biblical truth eventually becoming peaceful as they trust God. This is a step of encouragement.