

LIVING WITH YOUR EYES OPEN:

How Self-Deception Affects Us and Our Relationships

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Pharmacy Forward: Advancing Practice for a
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Disclosure Statement

- Bruce A. Berger, American Pharmacists Association, with which the individual has a relevant financial relationship(s), having received royalties from his book and his e-learning programs on motivational interviewing, and an honorarium for speaking at the 2026 APhA Annual Meeting.

and

- Innovative Healthcare Speakers, speaking fees





Learning Objectives

At the completion of this activity, the participant will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of seeing the reality of relation;
2. Describe how self-deception can lead to the distortion of how we see ourselves and others (including patients);
3. Describe how self-deception adversely affects our relationships with patients, co-workers and family.
4. Differentiate between the levels of seeing people as objects versus seeing people as people; and
5. List at least two ways to avoid self-deception and be able to see people as people, not as objects, more often.

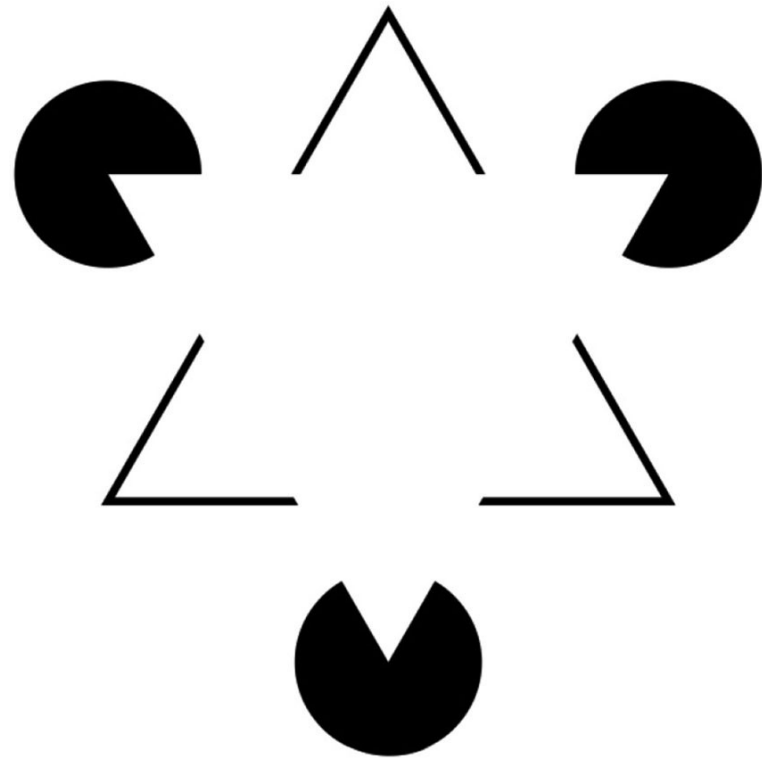
Introduction

- Freud asked an important question – “When are people NOT people?”
- If people are always people, to see someone as an object requires us to become “blind”
- But what causes our blindness?
- Often, we don’t see the truth about the world, ourselves and others



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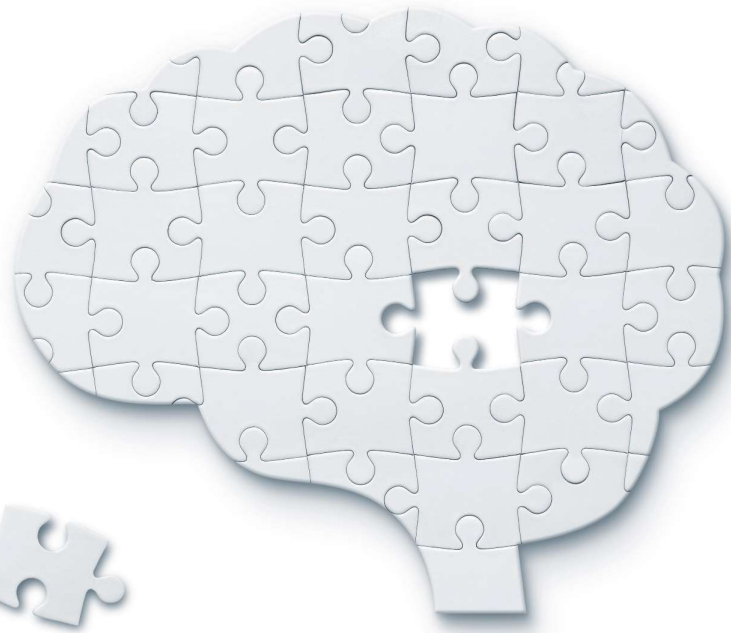




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What to Know:



- The brain is a prediction machine, locked in darkness
- Senses vibrations (light, sound, smell, touch)
- With our senses we perceive less than 1% of what is “out there”
- It makes its best guess of what is out there and then “tells us”
- Collects present and past data to make sense
- The brain can be wrong (F’s, Kanizsa Triangle, red mug, what else?)
- Dogs and sense of smell, large black dog, others
- Controlled hallucinations (Anil Seth)
- Thoughts are not facts



The Reality of Relation

- Individuality and separateness is an illusion – a construct of the brain
- Relation is reality
- We are born through relation
- We learn through relation
- We exist in “The Space Between”
- “What’s real about me in the world is how I show up in these intersections with the world. I am who I am in relation, which is another way of saying that there is no me—no anything, really— independent of those relations.”*

* (from Ferrell, Jim. *You and We*, Matt Holt Books, 2025)



The Reality of Relation

- **What have you accomplished entirely by yourself? That is, something where no one helped you in any way....no previous training, no previous interaction with anyone, no one influenced you. How about this talk? Who did it?**
- With every encounter we create a new relational choice (the space between us)
- What do we want to do with this?



Martin Buber

- Great philosopher
- I and Thou
- There is no “I”...we are an “I” in relationship to someone else
- All that we have learned...our language, what we know, how we behave, has been in relationship to/and impossible without another person or persons
- There is something deeper than behavior that others can sense – something that undercuts even what appears to be “correct” behavior or responses (from The Choice, The Arbinger Institute, 2000)

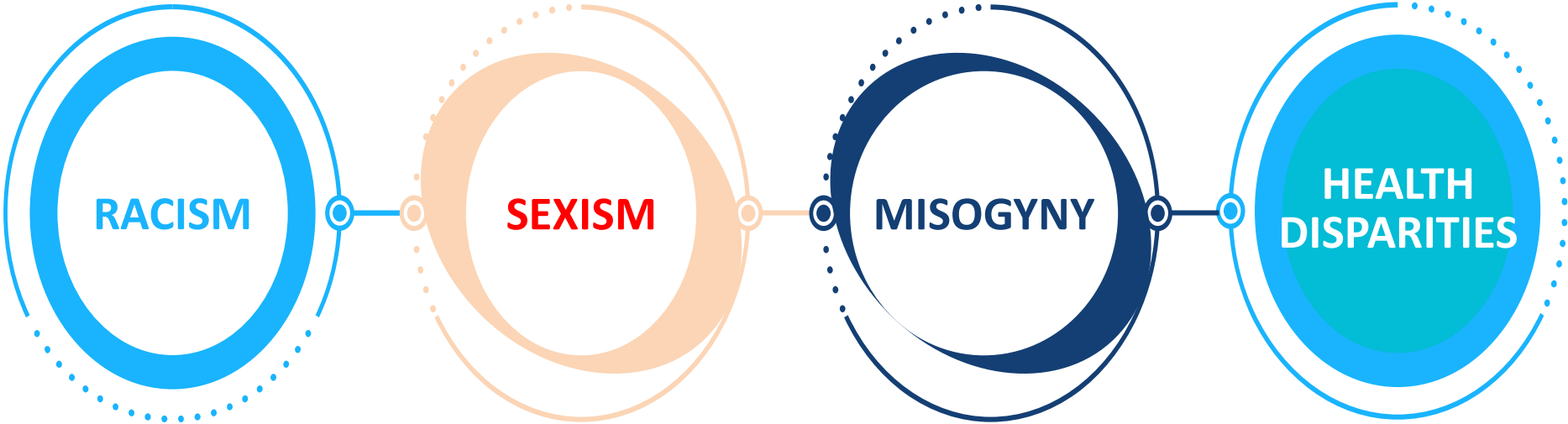


Examples

- Person in car cutting you off
- Mother sleeping, child cries
- Mother - lily plant (anger is borne in powerlessness), phone calls
- Difficult patient, noncompliant patient, problem patient, diabetic, 214



Examples of Objectification



Two Ways of Being

I - YOU

- We see people as people
- We present ourselves in authentic and genuine ways
- We open ourselves to another human being
- We allow ourselves to be changed by this opening up

I - IT

- People are objects
- I am resistant to their reality
- I can be deceived about their reality
- I may see them as less important, less relevant, less real
- I see them in my thoughts

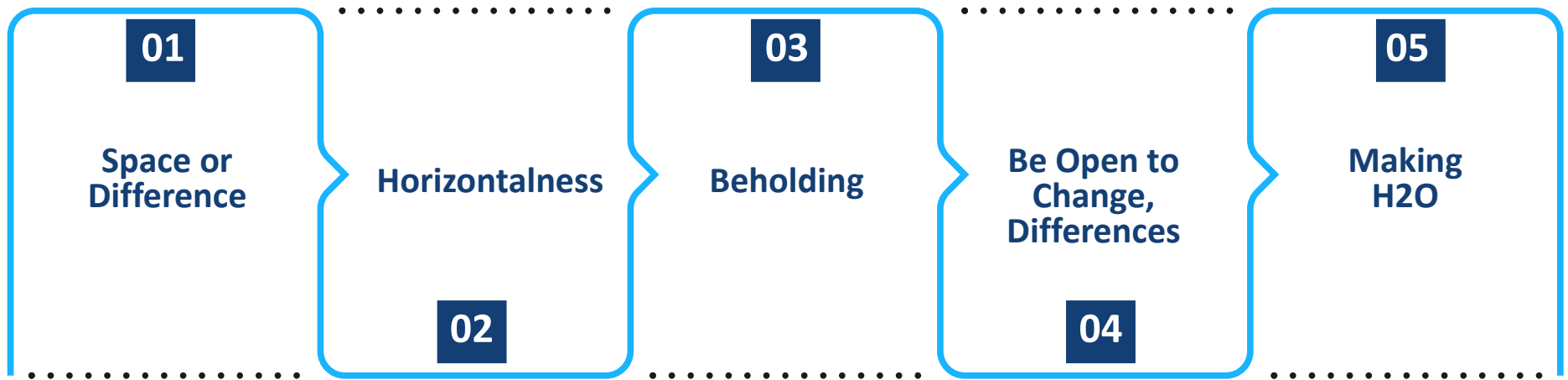


Levels of Relation (I-It)

- What characterizes I-It relations is they are in our head
- If we are judging someone, negatively or positively, we are I-It
- Traffic story
 - Angry at people and stuck in traffic, was I seeing people as I-It or I-You?
 - Thought about how people stuck in traffic with me were just trying to get somewhere, just like me, was I seeing people as I-It or I-You?
- What's the point?
 - I-It can range from extreme objectification to some reflection and compassion
 - I-It is necessary, or we might not get anything done



I – You Relations



(from Ferrell, Jim. *You and We*, Matt Holt Books, 2025)



How to Be I-You (More Often)

- Try to see the world of the other – but how?
- Think of ways (even small) to better understand this person
- Identify if there is something you feel you should do for this person
- Explore don't explain (especially important with nonadherence)
- Ask, "Might I be wrong?"
- Move from criticism to introspection

from The Choice, The Arbinger Institute, 2000

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A Shift is Needed in Health Care

- Moving from me and my agenda to the relationship with the patient
- The focus is on strengthening/leading the interaction NOT on maneuvering the patient
- Ask yourself, is what I am doing an extension of me, or does it involve the patient?
 - “We have been over this before. You need to take the medication every day if you want to get your blood pressure down.”
 - “What has made it challenging for you to take your blood pressure medication every day?”



What to Remember (The Choice, The Arbinger Institute, 2000)

- We are relational
- There are two ways of being in relation – being with people as people and seeing people as objects
- We remain I-You more often by responding to others – receiving the humanity of those we have been resisting and offering our humanity (**beholding and honoring differences**)
- If others are responsible for my misery (and my happiness) I am stuck. If I am responsible, I am free
- We don't react to others; we react to what they touch (bump into) in us.



What to Remember (The Choice, The Arbinger Institute, 2000)

- Without the power to choose misery, I am powerless to choose happiness
- The power to choose is mine...every minute, every day. Do I choose responsiveness or resistance to people?
- Herein lies my freedom. The world I encounter springs from my own soul. Which world do I choose?



A Final Thought

We are all connected and in relationship with each other.

I give birth to my thoughts through my interaction with you.

I learn to love through you.

I have empathy because you have extended it to me.

I have courage because you have encouraged me.

When I objectify you (and you, me), none of this is possible!

When I really see you (and you, me), our worlds open up!



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Need More Information?

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