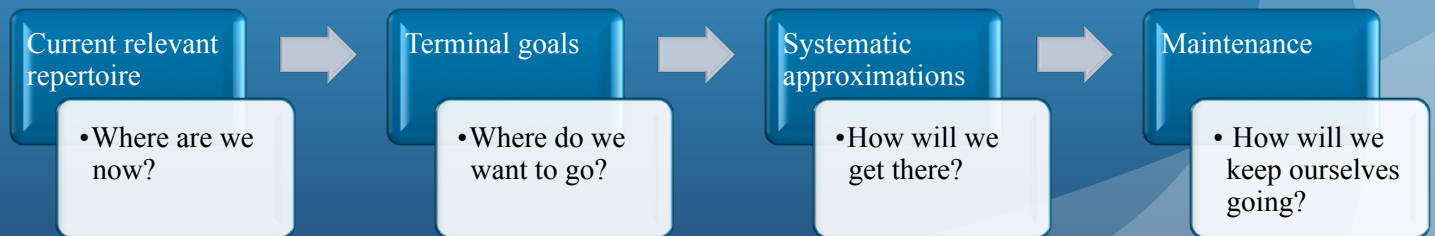


The Constructional Approach

Israel Goldiamond



Created by Kimberly James-Kelly

The linear approach to casework

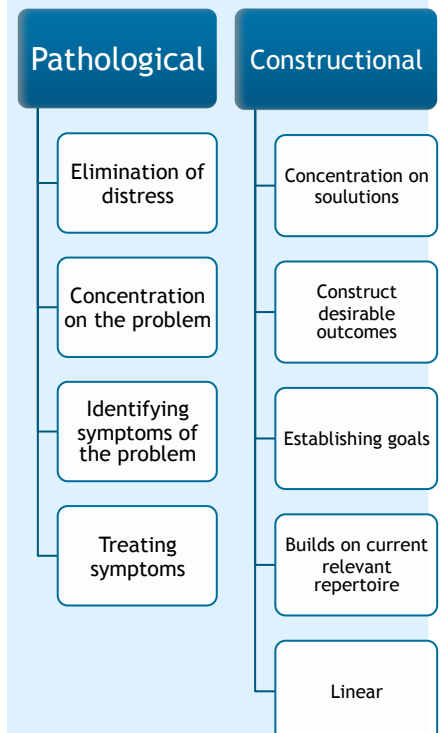
“We can bring a horse to water and we can make him drink if we make him thirsty first.”

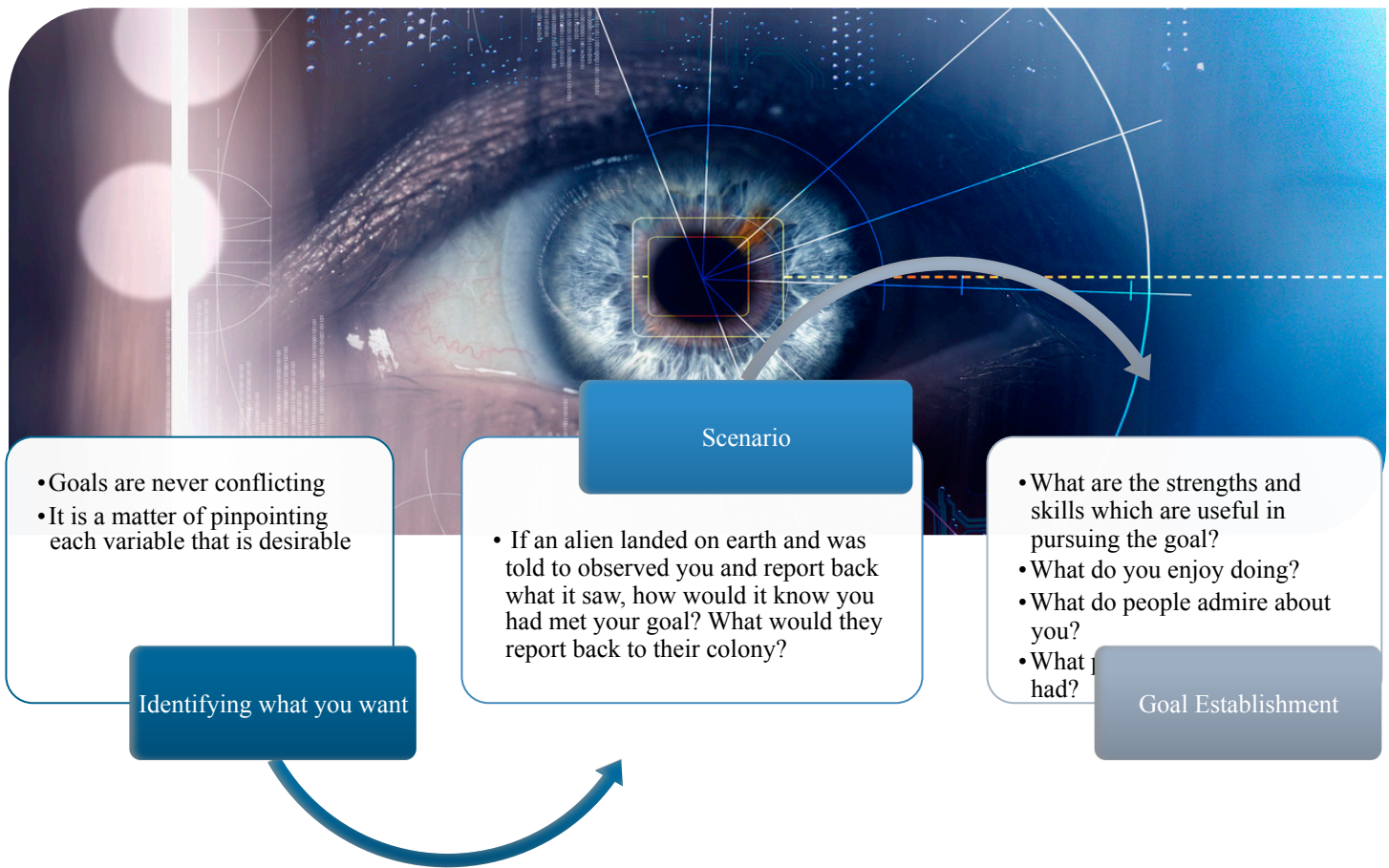
Constructional programs are typically divided into four distinct stages: (1) current relevant repertoire, (2) terminal goals, (3) systematic approximations to the terminal goal(s) and (4) maintenance (Goldiamond, 1975). Accordingly, CSM works with students to identify, “Where are we now?” “Where do we want to go?” “How do we get from where we are now to where we want to go?” and “How do we keep ourselves going?” (18-min/15 sec, where do we go from here?).

What’s the point?

The task of casework in this orientation is to help the consumer develop procedures useful in specifying the changes *s/he wants*, in analyzing their *current life situation or their person-contingency ecology* and in developing processes to produce effective changes. The caseworker functions as consultant who helps the consumer design an *individualized program* of intervention to produce the changes *s/he desires*. In the course of this analysis the student makes explicit those variables controlling his behavior and sets up a plan, to modify the target behavior(s). As the consumer achieves success, consultation is gradually phased out. Thus more of the consumer's life comes under their control, hence the title "self control" and the rationale of the approach. Goldiamond, Social Casework, p. 73-74

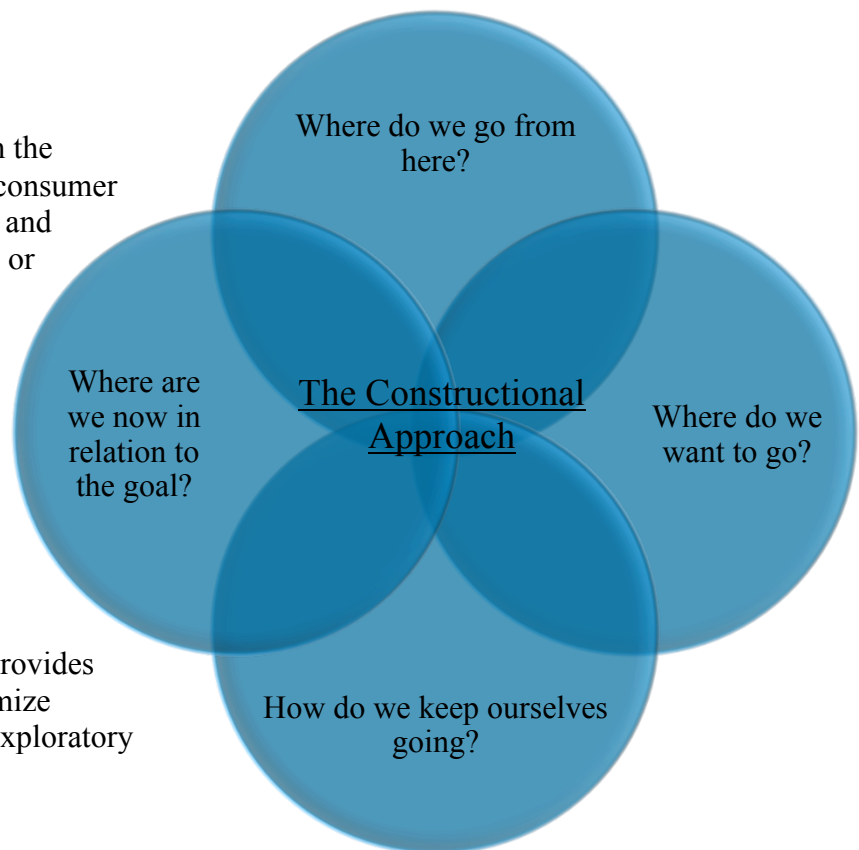
Pathological vs. Constructional





Getting Started

The first meeting is designed to establish the consumer/caseworker relationship. The consumer is introduced to the steps of the program and they may elect to continue with program or not. With the consumer's buy-in, the caseworker begins with step one, "Where are we now?" (18-min/15 sec, where do we go from here?). The consumer is given a log; which allows them the opportunity to track the events of their day. The log is a way for the consumer to practice identifying the contingencies that regulate their behavior. The caseworker reviews the exploratory log with the consumer and provides examples of how to complete it to maximize results. Figure 1.1 is an example of the exploratory log.



“Goals are never conflicting...” - Israel Goldiamond

DATE: JUNE 4

	1	2	3	4
	TIME	ACTIVITY	(setting) WHERE	WHO WAS THERE
T1	7:00 A.M.	Eating breakfast	At home	Wife, 2 yr. old son
T2	8:00 A.M.	Driving	Highway	Self
T3	9:00 A.M.	Mail	At desk	Mr. X. (next desk)
T4	10:00 A.M.	Work	Desk, on telephone	Constant interruption
T5	11:00 A.M.	Same	Same	Same
T6	12:00-1:00 P.M.	Lunch	Cafe	Was alone
T7	1:00-5:00 P.M.	Work	Desk, other offices	Co-workers

Figure 1.1 The Log

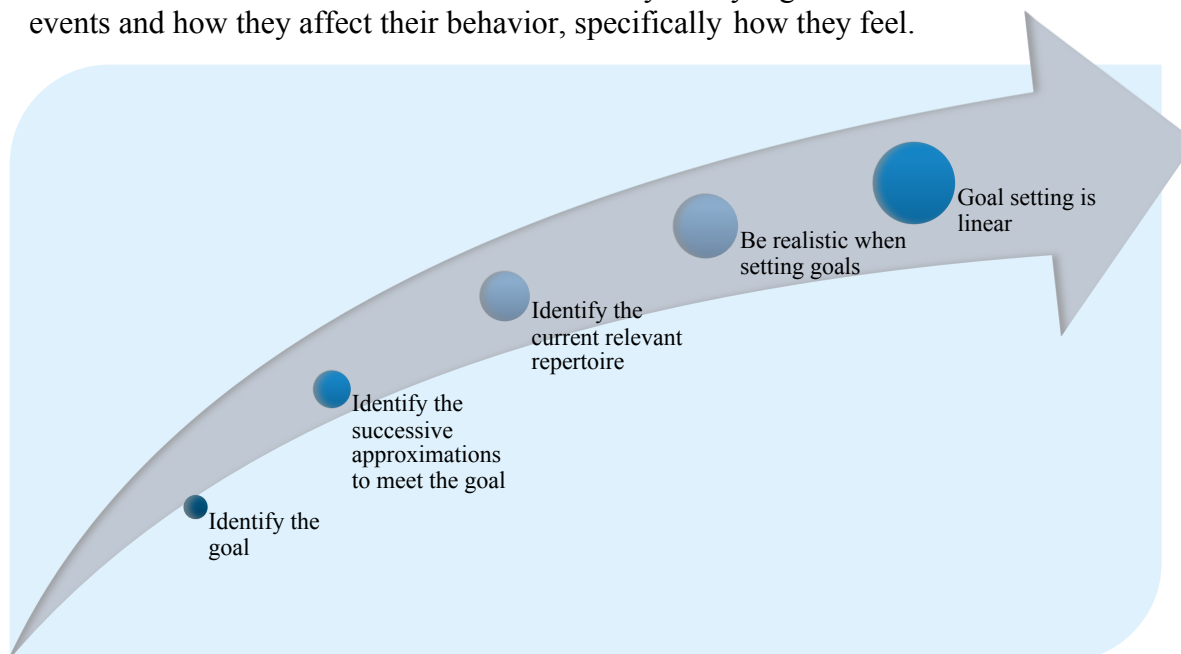
Note the headers. The purpose here is to identify patterns in your everyday that either move you closer to or further away from your goals (Goldiamond, 1969, p. 164).

The exploratory log allows the consumer to record and reflect upon his or her own behavior(s). This invaluable tool provides a foundation for the individualized plan, allowing the consumer and their caseworker to formulate goals, identify barriers in the environment and allows consumers to identify those environments within which they operate affectively and successfully, as well as areas that could benefit from modification.

At the end of the first interview, the caseworker and the consumer set a meeting time/date to review the following week's exploratory log data. This meeting time is set as a reoccurring appointment each week. Ideally, the consumer completes the log weekly and reviews it with the caseworker in an effort to identify patterns and establish goals.

Establishing Goals

Establishing goals provides the consumer the opportunity to identify those things they would like to achieve across their lifetime beginning with immediate goals, such as, graduating college or getting out of debt. By this time, the consumer has learned to track his or her behavior, to effectively analyze how their environment affects their behavior and is aware that their choices from day to day regulate and influence future events and how they affect their behavior, specifically how they feel.



Goal setting is a matter of establishing where you want to go and how to get there

What are the strengths and skills that will be useful in pursuing the goal?

What do you enjoy doing? Recall your past successes. How did you achieve those goals?

The Scenario

It is often difficult to identify those goals that we have for ourselves. Thus, Goldiamond provides the following example that caseworks should present to the consumer in an effort to make clear those goals they have for themselves:

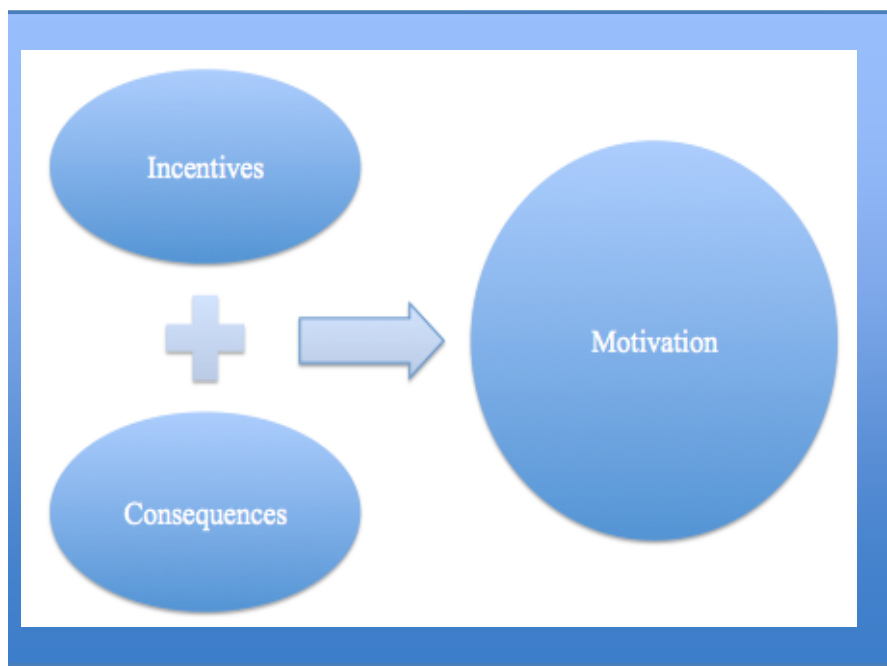
Suppose a UFO landed on earth. A Martian comes out and is assigned to follow you around and then report back to the colony. It is told to report what he saw you doing for 6 months after you met your goals. What would he report back that he observed you doing? (Goldiamond, 1969).

Silly as it may be, the idea here is to imagine where you want to be in relation to where you currently are. When assessing goals it is important to consider factors such as, previous successes, the things you are passionate about, what you enjoy doing, what you do not enjoy doing, what are your strengths, how your strengths relate to your goal, etc (Goldiamond, 1969).

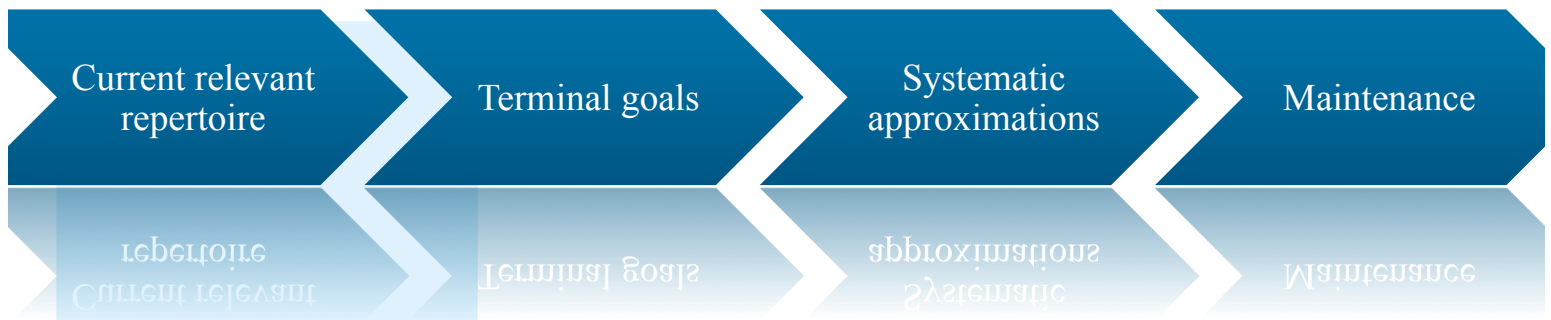
“To establish and maintain ... control over his own behavior requires *insight by the patient into the contingencies and consequences* governing his own behavior, as well as his ability to control and manipulate these variables. Such self-control over complex behavior requires the patient to observe and relate his behavior to other events, and to bring to bear upon such relations a body of effective procedures, which change them. He is to *discover which variables are* relevant to his own behavior by recording and analyzing the data he has collected; he *changes his behavior by developing and applying* appropriate programming procedures.” Goldiamond, 1969, p. 225

Once you’ve established a goal

Once a goal has been established, then it is the task of the caseworker and the consumer to work together to break the goal into manageable steps, or approximations. Next, the caseworker and the consumer must identify motivators that will keep the consumer actively working toward meeting each established approximation.



Incentives and consequences are invaluable when establishing goals. If the consumer is not met with frequent success and reinforcement, then it is unlikely that he or she will continue working to meet the terminal goal. Thus, Goldiamond suggests that goals should be observable so that it is apparent when it is achieved. While feeling good and happy is a great goal, it is difficult to measure, talk about and manipulate. While feelings and emotions are important to consider, they do not instigate behavior change. Therefore, it is suggested that the consumer remain mindful of the way in which attaining each goal or being met with a set back effects his or her behavior, but in observable terms. Doing so will allow the caseworker and the consumer to work together to make modifications to the program that will bring the consumer closer to achieving his or her goal.



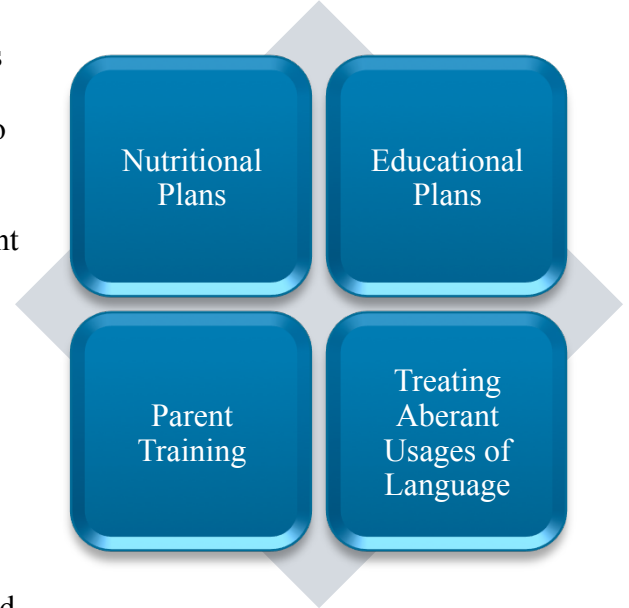
Motivation

- Observable
- Extrinsic
- Larger later vs. Smaller sooner
- Highly desirable
- Linear
- Preferred activities
- Skills

The final phase

Maintenance is not simply remaining stagnant once the established goal is met. This process should be one that allows the consumer to identify the variables in their environment that can be manipulated to achieve success, however it is defined. Through this approach, students will not only learn how to set and achieve goals, but Goldiamond submits that this process aids consumers in acquiring “self control” over their behavior (Goldiamond, 1969, p. 225).

The goal of this program is to teach the consumer the requisite skills necessary to identify what they want. Once he or she has identified a goal, to pinpoint where they are in relation to that goal and slowly work toward attaining that goal by working through a series of successive approximations. Another goal of this program is to teach the consumer how to program, regulate and deliver incentives, preferred consequences and reinforcers for small achievements. Finally, it is task of the caseworker to teach these skills and fade out, allowing the consumer to become his or her own contingency manager, tacter and program implementer.



This approach has been successfully applied in a variety of arenas, including dietary interventions, individualized education plans, parent training, marital counseling and treating aberrant speech patterns. It is a unique way to capture the molar while remaining sensitive to molecular consequences. The Constructional Approach has been adapted and used within a multitude of settings and continues to be adapted to meet the needs of consumers.