

Season Two, Episode 7: “Changes in Behaviors”

Guests: Doni Iraheta, Behavior Therapist; Dr. Anton Tolman, Professor of Psychology.

GREG: Welcome to the Exploring the Core Podcast. I’m your host, Greg Mullen.

In this episode, I’m exploring the second-most inner layer in my framework that looks at six specific words we often refer to as attributes, or characteristics, and I’ll be looking at how each of these six words carries with it a range of behaviors where, on either end, are potentially unhealthy degrees of each attribute. Each attribute has a healthy balance that relies on our understanding of a situation’s context and circumstances, and I’ll be starting this episode with a quick description of these attributes, but most of this episode will be dedicated to two conversations I had with professionals who work in the field of behavior change, the first being with Doni Iraheta, a behavior analyst who talks about his approach for addressing challenging behaviors in children. The second conversation is with Dr. Anton Tolman, a professor of psychology at Utah Valley University, who talks about behavior change from his perspective as a clinical psychologist as well as a research professor working with models of behavior change that actually have strong connections to what we call a Growth Mindset, which is very popular concept in education.

Now I’d like to briefly introduce the following six attributes - courage, temperance, pride, friendliness, wittiness, and magnanimity. Each attribute has extreme ranges of behavior that, while some might call unhealthy, I’d argue that context and circumstance has a lot to do with how we perceive and describe these ranges of behavior.

The first attribute is Courage, which is all about our sense of risk-aversion and how much we’re willing to forego danger or pain to accomplish a task in different situations. One side of this attribute’s range of behavior is an excess of courage, which to some may come across as reckless, while the other extreme would be a deficiency of courage we might describe as cowardice. And we actually talk about this attribute in a lot of different stories, and books, and movies, and they’re fantastic opportunities to have conversations about these attributes and their ranges.

For example, in the 2013 Superman movie Man of Steel, Kevin Costner plays Superman’s dad, well in the movie, Costner runs into a life-threatening situation to save the family dog from danger during a tornado - which we can call courageous in that he’s foregoing danger to accomplish a task. But he ends up hurting his foot, is unable to get to safety, and instead of letting his grown son Clark Kent save him in front of a crowd of people, before anyone knew about Superman, Kevin Costner holds up his hand to basically say, “don’t use your powers to save me in front of all these people”. Now comic book fans hotly debate whether this scene is nonsensical since Clark could have easily saved his father, but it’s this conversation itself that I’m saying is so valuable because we

won't always agree on what *too much* courage actually means, because to define it is to understand not only the context of a situation, but our sense of risk-aversion and how much danger or pain we'd be willing to forego to accomplish a task in a particular situation. By asking at what point would we call someone's behavior reckless, well that's something we want our students and children to be open to discussing, so they can recognize this range of behavior and be comfortable reflecting on the degree of risk aversion they're comfortable with, understanding that others might not think the same way, which leads us to a more meaningful understanding of empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, and building a stronger understanding of who we are as individuals, rather than who everyone should be based on our individual perspective. And this range of courage as an attribute isn't just about physical danger or pain, there are plenty of examples where social danger, or emotional danger, may have to be considered, and knowing where you stand on how much you're willing to forego to accomplish a task is a very important part of who you are - and how you learn, and the more we dismiss these conversations, the more frustrated we get when we don't understand where others are coming from.

Keep in mind, it isn't that we're creating a list of exactly what we'd do in an infinite number of situations, that'd be an unreasonably complicated list to create and keep in our heads. No, what we're doing is exercising an extremely important aspect of critical thinking that's part of who we are, and by developing this part of ourselves with our students, our children, we as adults get to finetune our understanding of what an attribute like courage means in a variety of situations, but then we get to apply that to the kinds of competencies and values and elements of an environment that I've talked about throughout this season.

Now for sake of time, I won't go into this much detail for the rest of the six attributes, but I do want to quickly share a sentence about each one. Temperance. This one is all about self-control and moderation, and ranges from having too much of this attribute we can refer to as insensibility where we unreasonably limit what makes us happy to an unhealthy extreme, but we can also have too little of this attribute which is often described as self-indulgent, and between those extremes is temperance and is defined by our capacity to reflect on a situation's context and circumstance. Pride is another attribute that highlights our positive self-image and a strong sense of self-efficacy, and deals with a range of behaviors from vanity, or having too much pride in yourself, to diffidence, having too little pride. Then we have Friendliness which ranges from an excess we call flattery to a deficiency we call surliness. Now wittiness, that's our approach toward humor, and ranges from silly self-deprecating buffoonery to a degree of boorishness, a dry insensitive wit, that we might describe as honest to a fault. And lastly we have magnanimity, which is all about how much you're willing to give and not just of things but of yourself, and ranges from prodigal (or wasteful extravagance) to miserly (or not at all giving). So we have these six attributes, each with ranges of behaviors, and as we go from childhood to adolescence, we often play with these ranges as situations present themselves to us, and

we spend years challenging the boundaries that others place on them, and figure out what ranges we're comfortable with, and which ranges seem to make others more or less comfortable, then deciding throughout adolescence and into adulthood which ranges work for how we want to live our lives.

And, honestly, we don't really think about this much, since as adults usually we don't have to unless it's something that comes up in a book or a movie that we're talking about with friends, but we rarely actually talk about these ranges when we talk about how people behave, and the more we as adults normalize these ranges, the more we'll be able to help our students, our children, come to develop a stronger sense of themselves by making sense of these ranges and what they mean in different situations, and it really doesn't have to be a big ordeal, it can be as simple as us as adults referring to these attributes to talk about the books and movies we're already enjoying.

I would love to talk more about each of these ranges for each attribute, and maybe I'll add a bonus episode that goes into more examples, but I'm just as excited to share two conversations with professionals who work in the field of behavior change, because as important as these attributes are, it's equally important to not only identify these ranges of behaviors, but also think about how we might be able to change our tendency for one behavior or another, in one situation or another, so stick around to hear from Doni Iraheta, a behavior analyst who talks about helping families address challenging child behaviors.

[MUSIC]

GREG: Doni Iraheta is a behavior analyst and parent of two in Southern California, and in our conversation, we get into some pretty deep ideas about behavior and how he not only uses certain strategies to help his clients, but he also uses them to help his own children develop the kinds of behaviors his family want to see in their children. Well we got our chat going pretty casually with a quick question about how he came to become a behavioral analyst, which actually is a pretty interesting story.

DONI: "There was never a plan to learn any of this, first of all, so, it started out just training my dog for movies and commercials and things like that. Through that process, I had a mentor that basically taught me all the ins and outs of animal behavior, probably not all of it, but he taught me a lot about behavior and it was really interesting. Just understanding differences in different types of animals and making the connection between the type of animal your training and the environment, analyzing what just happened and taking that into consideration in your next attempt to whatever you're trying to train into that animal. So it just became an interest of mine, and I kept learning and learning and learning and that became a thing I had a passion for, it was fun to train animals, and I wanted to help animals that were, for example there were dogs who weren't able to be adopted because they're aggressive or they were fearful or things like that, and I was able to help some dogs get adopted and things like that - it became a

passion. Eventually, I believe she was a board certified behavior analyst, she saw how well behaved my dog was, and so she was asking me about it. It basically became a conversation that led her to invite me to become a behavior therapist for children - and that was very interesting to me because animals are one thing, when you consider the behavior of an animal, it's on a certain level, but children have an additional level, there's an extra dimension to their thinking, and I don't have a better way to describe it but they - if an animal's hungry and you put food in front of it, it's going to eat. That's the best example I can give. But if a child is hungry and you put food in front of it, it depends on what else is going on. They may not want to eat because they're, you're in a battle - it's a different level of thinking for children, so that piqued my interest. So I took the offer and started with children with ADHD, Autism, Down Syndrome, pretty much any kind of learning disability or some of the kids excelled in school but struggled with joining a conversation appropriately, struggled with reading social cues with their peers, or things like that. Then on the other hand, I was helping a kid learn how to feed himself or to dress himself or things like that. There was a lot of variety, and I had to step back and analyze every situation. It drew me in further and further, and that's how I became a behavior therapist."

GREG: One of the things we really got into, with regards to behavior change, is this idea of having a goal in mind to help shape how you approach a child's behavior, which came up when I asked about how he separates behaviors that children will learn on their own without his help as an analyst, or even as a parent, versus behaviors he thinks might directly benefit a child if he were to coach them as a behavior analyst.

DONI: "I think that's a lot of behavior in general, picking out what your goal is. If you don't have a goal, it's way too complex to be effective at anything if you don't have an idea of what good looks like. There's certain things that a child is going to learn one way or another, eventually. They're going to pick it up from referencing other people - they're going to learn those things. So for those types of things, I try to add another element to it, have them consider other aspects of what they're doing, like with my daughter I want her to be observant, I wanted her to understand what was happening around her. There are things I taught her that I don't think she would have, like I don't think she would have been as observant as she is, considering people's motives, for example. She's very good at understanding potentially why somebody did or didn't do something, and it helps her navigate social situations, it helps her now in a lot of situations, and I think that's something she may not have learned as well if I didn't purposely focus on that. There's multiple reasons why I did that, one was again to consider motive, another one is to help her understand that it's not as bad as she thinks it is. I think that over time, it wasn't one incident that she crossed over, it's over time she eventually says, she'll start saying 'this thing happened to me and I think they did it because of this', and then you know it's part of her process now. So it's hard to define a single moment, but you just one day notice she's doing it automatically, you know?"

GREG: Doni's daughter is now in middle school, so I asked him how he and his family managed with his daughter shifting to learning from home during the pandemic, and one of the things that came up was the issue of scheduling and time-management, which is usually something a school does for students with a set bell schedule already in place. But learning at home, the student has more responsibility for managing their own time, so it was interesting to hear how he as a parent and as a behavior analyst approached this kind of change in his daughter's learning environment.

DONI: "Some might be shocked to hear this, but letting her fail was one approach. [...] By letting her fail, I mean give her the reins, let her take control for a week, and at the end of the week go back, and first of all you're showing trust. You're saying, 'hey, you take control of this, you're responsible' - and you're meaning what you say. You're saying they're responsible, and then you've got to show that. You've got to commit to that. So I gave her a week. You come back in after that week and you assess what happened. Well, this was late, that didn't get turned in, I missed that zoom class, and whatever happened you go back and say we've got to do this better, and maybe help get some strategies. Most of the time, I didn't need to give the strategies, I just needed to ask what are you going to do better next time. (GREG: did you tell her in advance you were gonna check in every week?) No, I don't think I did. It was more of a 'go for it' and a week later, and sometimes it was four days or a week and half later, the point was that I checked in and helped her recognize the point of failure, and the next week she had another opportunity to do it better.

GREG: So I felt like I had to bring up rewards and punishments because they're big issue for teachers who want their students to behave in specific ways, and the same goes for parents, so I ask Doni what he thinks about the use of punishments, in the context of helping his daughter develop the kind of behaviors he was talking about.

DONI: "Technically speaking, the punishment was having to recognize that she failed, having to reconcile with her failure. So I guess a lot of people I think the general public's understanding of punishment and reinforcement or reward is, I don't think they have the full picture. She had her own punishment, and that was she had to understand that she failed, she had to take that in and accept it, and then she had to go through the work to figure out what to do better, she had to do it better, and caused her to change up her routine or change up her thought process. So that was the punishment so to speak."

GREG: Doni as a parent has a lot of great insights, but Doni as a behavior analyst working with families has just as much great input to share. And as he talks about the kind of behaviors he helped families deal with, I think it's important I point out how much of the behaviors being changed are the children's and how much are the parent's, and I feel it's important to look at whether it's more, less, or equal between the two, depending on the situation.

DONI: “So when I was working with kids, a lot of the parents were at wits end, they didn’t know what to do. They’re exhausted, felt defeated, some parents had decided their child is incapable of whatever. Part of my job working with kids was working with parents to help them understand that things were possible, that they had the power to help change these things, that it wasn’t just me coming in there to make changes, it was ‘hey, I’m only here for two hours a week or whatever, the rest of the week I’m not there, so whatever effect I have pales in comparison to what they’re capable of’. So a lot of it was teaching them how the parents’ behavior affects the behavior of their kid. So let’s say a lot of kids had tantrums. What you realize in that situation, and what the parents didn’t always see was that they had built up those tantrums, the parents inadvertently had built up those tantrums over time, not realizing they were doing it. Nothing starts full scale. It may have started with a small tantrum. Again, what happens after that tantrum is going to make the next one more or less likely to happen. So if you get down the path of making it happen by, for example, this is a common one, ‘hey, if you don’t stop crying, I’m not going to buy you ice cream’. When you break that down, what just happened? They threw a tantrum and got ice cream out of it. Not to mention the time is a very important factor when there’s a punishment or reward. So they threw a tantrum, and in that tantrum, in the middle of it, you offer them ice cream. The parent is just trying to get them out of the tantrum, they don’t understand the complexity of what they’re doing necessarily, but over time maybe ice cream isn’t enough. Maybe the tantrum continues after the tantrum. So now it goes longer, or harder, or louder, or throwing things, it just gets worse and at that point they don’t know how to stop the spiral. But I’d like to clarify too that a lot of this is with consideration to the motivation for that tantrum. That if something really hurt her feelings and was very upset about something that hurt her emotionally or physically or something like that, there’s a totally different approach to that. That has to be considered - the motivation, why did this behavior happen. And if it was an emotional thing, now my goal is, I’m going to support her emotionally and show her I’m trustworthy and I’ll comfort her and help her cope with it and feel safe and secure. Then it’s a totally different goal and I take a totally different approach. That’s where I think parents really benefit from being able to consider why did this happen, what was the motivation for this, and then address the behavior based on that emotion.

GREG: The last question I had for Doni called back to the idea that having a goal in mind is important for addressing specific behaviors; as Doni said, it’s way too complex to be effective at managing a behavior if you don’t have an idea of what good looks like. So when I asked Doni whether he thought schools would benefit from offering behavior training for parents, and he had some good thoughts about whether that might be a good idea for parents.

DONI: “So first of all, if the resources are there, I think parents getting behavior training any way they can is a good thing. Whether it’s a local adult school or the child’s school providing it. I also know that there’s a lot of parents who would not be receptive to anything like that coming from their school. And there’s this sort of feeling that, like, ‘I’m

the parent and I know how to raise my own child'. In a general sense, that may be true, I don't think they're willing to acknowledge that they could learn more about it and be better at it."

GREG: I'm so glad Doni brought this up because the idea of adults being unwilling to consider learning new skills or concepts, for whatever reason, is exactly what the next conversation in this episode addresses. As adults, and even college students and teenagers, how we've developed our own self-awareness, our own Readiness to acknowledge that we can learn more about something, is the topic of a book called *Why Students Resist Learning*, by Dr. Anton Tolman. And when I return, I'll share segments of my conversation with Dr. Tolman and his work with behavior change theories in older students.

[MUSIC]

GREG: Dr. Anton Tolman is a professor at Utah Valley University and author of the book, "Why Students Resist Learning", which as you can imagine looks at specific elements that explain the resistance to learning that educators face in higher education. The model he designed takes our own understanding of self-reflection and cognitive development, and overlaps that with elements of our environment, such as work, family, and classroom experiences, and shines a light on how these elements can result in resistance to learning which teachers and parents already know is happening but can now identify and minimize that resistance by changing the behaviors of both the students as well as a school's staff. But what really makes his work so valuable is that it's based on something called the TTM, which stands for the Trans-Theoretical Model for behavior change. This model gives us a conceptual understanding for how, in education, we can intentionally develop the kind of growth mindset that has long been known as effective for helping people learn more. So I'd like to first share a few initial thoughts Dr. Tolman had about education and the connections he's making to the TTM in general.

DR. TOLMAN: "We talk about education as change, so, in fact, people will often say, as John Tagg famously wrote, that change is the heart of education. We don't often think of it that way, and yet if you learn something, if you can remember something, if you can apply something you've learned, something has changed in your brain, in your attitude, in your memory. I mean, there's a whole neuropsychology that I could go into, but there is literal physical change occurring in your brain. So the more I thought about that, and the more I thought about the TTM, the TTM is a model that describes how people change their behaviors, and how they are successful at doing that; what are the means by which somebody adopts new behaviors and is able to maintain those - that's what the TTM's all about. Yet, I thought, okay, I'll look into the education field to see what people have been doing with change theory and there was like nothing there which, frankly, shocked me. I was thinking I must be looking in the wrong places, and I kept looking and looking, and I couldn't find anything. And, in fact, the TTM, the advantage of that approach not only

describes how that change can occur, it describes the processes that are used, the underlying procedures and things we go through in order for that change to happen, and that has been lacking, unfortunately, in a lot of the existing literature.”

GREG: When I first heard of the TTM, it seemed like a pretty abstract theory for behavior change, and like many theories was removed from practical in-the-classroom strategies, so I asked what exactly about this model attracted Dr. Tolman to think this could be used to improve things like interventions in schools - for both staff and students, and how this model actually works to help people make effective and lasting changes to teaching and learning.

DR. TOLMAN: “The TTM has a series of stages that it describes for how people move through the process of change. One of the things they, the creators, Prochaska, the main driver of the TTM, Prochaska and DeClemente, but they found in their early research that, I mean, take New Year’s Resolutions, right? It’s very common for people to recognize the need for change, or want to change, and start to do a little, but kind of slide backwards. And in the field of clinical work, we call that relapse. They wanted to destigmatize that a little so they called that recycling). And what they actually found is that it’s pretty normative when you’re trying to learn, not just a fact, but when you’re actually trying to change your own behavior, sliding back is normal in humans. What I like about the TTM in an educational context is you can tell students, it’s okay, it’s normal - I’d like you to try these new things, I’d like you to do these new things, and if the students fall backwards, you mentioned a fixed mindset, so they might say I’m not good at this, I can’t do this. I’m not good at math, I’m not an artist, whatever it might be, it’s the either-or type, right? No, it’s okay, it’s fine to slide back when you try to change. But, the TTM tells you where to pick up, so if you do slide backwards you can reassess where you are and say I know what to do to move forward, and I’ll do that again. And what Prochaska and others would use the TTM in their studies found is, people who are able to do that, are able to dust themselves off, get back on the horse, and they know what they need to do or are guided by a therapist or someone, they are able to, then, their chance of success increases as they continue this process. They actually draw it almost like a spiral staircase going up, so you kind of go up then you come back down, then you go up and back down, and so that’s okay and students don’t have to feel stigmatized, we don’t need to stigmatize them, we can acknowledge that, and sometimes it’s frustrating but that’s a normal human process.”

GREG: What was really fascinating about what Dr. Tolman was describing was the idea that this TTM model for behavior change might actually be able to help us make intentional changes to behaviors just by knowing what stage of this TTM we identify with, so that we could make intentional decisions to improve our situation or even recognize in someone else how to help improve their situation. So I asked Dr. Tolman how he intended to make this model work for people who want to use it to help themselves change whatever behavior they wanted to see changed.

DR. TOLMAN: "One of the advantages of the TTM is, and that's why I developed the tool that I did, is to make it visible - what stage is someone in? How do we know? And so the TTM has these five stages, which I kind of parsed into six for my own purposes, but, the lowest stage, we'll just use one example for time sake, and that lowest stage is called Pre-Contemplation. So this is not even thinking of change, so these are the students that really have no personal narrative as a learner, they just go to school and the teacher tells them to do X and they do that and that's it. They don't have any sense of themselves as a person that is engaged in learning from the environment around them, at least in the context of education. They may do that in their video games, or may do that in other ways, but they don't do it in that context, and that's the problem. The main process of change that Prochaska and his colleagues have really looked at, is moving people out of Pre-Contemplation, is, it really is, it's called "Consciousness Raising". So if you don't know there's a reason for that change to occur, if you don't see any benefit to that change occurring, then why would you change? Why would you do anything different? It takes effort, it's frustrating, so why would I do that? And so the whole point of that is, if you know someone's in Pre-Contemplation, then the goal is, how do you get them to begin to recognize that there's value in making that change? And that the cool thing about the TTM is that it's structured like a triangle. And so the state of change is at the top, but the other two points of the triangle, the angles, are student self-efficacy, their belief that they're capable of change, right? Which actually fits with our educational experience and there's also home and cultural things as well, "girls are no good at science", those kinds of things that have been there for a long time; and the other is what they call the Pros and Cons, Decisional Balance, so it's like a teeter-totter, so at what point does the teeter-totter begin to tip in the other direction? And that's more related to the individual's own assessment of how much work is there to making that change? And so if I know that, and if I can evaluate where a student is, or where my class as a group is, I can begin to figure out ways that I can use that information and begin to challenge them to make these processes of change work. And when you begin to do that, you begin to enable them to shift forward and to adopt better, more effective ways of learning. The second piece of that is, though, you have to actually teach them how to learn more effectively, in a very specific and effective way. Because as you said before, just saying "try harder" does not usually work very well. In order for Consciousness Raising to work, the person has to, and it's uncomfortable, they have to feel some dissonance. They have to feel, 'maybe what I'm doing isn't working very much' and 'is there a better way to do this?' And so, in my own research, I've developed an instrument to assess a student's level of change, where are they in the stages, and then I realized, ok, well how are we going to begin to push them to think about how to make that change. So I've developed another instrument called the Learning Strategies Self-Assessment, LSSA. The reason I did that is because there's a lot of instruments out there that exist that are basically measures of student attitudes about changing. And those have a place, they are useful for things, but there were hardly any instruments that actually used behavioral strategies for how you can learn better, and ask students, 'are you doing these strategies?' And the fact that you could ask a student

in an assignment, for example, to take this survey, and they're going to look at this survey, and say, 'I don't know what that is, I've never done that'. And so by putting 'no, I've never done that' or 'I don't do that at all' or 'well, I do that every now and then', and then at the end you ask them, there are qualitative questions at the end that say, look at your strengths and your weaknesses, where are you strong, where are you weak, what could you do to improve? So that is an attempt at both Consciousness Raising and, kind of, fostering metacognitive development, right? They began to recognize, I didn't see 're-reading that chapter' on the list, but there are a lot of things on there that I don't do. So when that assignment and that feedback is framed in that way, it becomes an opportunity for them to actually begin to shift their personal narrative, and begin to say, 'maybe there are ways of learning better I can use - I'm good at this and I'm not good at that, and maybe I need to work on that and begin that process of doing that.'

GREG: One of the aspects of Dr. Tolman's book is the idea of developing in students a scholarly identity, especially as it relates to the kind of personal narratives students develop about themselves when they attend school. And whether you attended public school, private school, a democratic free school, were home schooled or were part of a self-directed learning cooperative, the beliefs you develop while in a learning environment really plays a role in how you develop your identity, your view towards certain kinds of relationships, and your world view in general. So I wanted to know what led Dr. Tolman to incorporate this idea of scholarly identity into his work with behavior change.

DR. TOLMAN: "The transition from K-12 to College is an area of interest. One of the problems is, if you speak to college professors about introductory students, they often have negative assumptions or comments about those students, that the students are not prepared, that the students don't really want to learn, they just want to get a grade, and so on, part of which contributes to student resistance, so that's a piece of that, we have to fix our own wheelhouse, we have to address our own issues as part of that. But the other part is that we need to be able to help students to change the way they view themselves, because when they come to college, they have often, a lot of them, especially first generation students or underrepresented students, often have been just told that, you have to go to college if you want to be successful in life. And they don't really know why, other than, well, you get this degree and this degree opens doors for you, and there is some truth to that, of course. But the problem is that studies are showing employers are worried about higher education because that's not enough. And what the employers are most valuing is not, 'do you know something about the field?', because in today's world you can learn a lot from wikipedia, and Google, you can buy some books, get a mentor, and can learn the content. The real problem is the skill development. The real problem is critical thinking, communication, the ability to work with people. Those are the core of what makes people successful in life, yet those are not things students think about when they go to school. They don't think, 'I'm going to school to develop my collaborative learning skills', right? [...] And the image they have of themselves, their personal narrative we call that, or their personal identity, is not focused on being a learned person, it's not

focused on being a scholar. It's about jumping through some hoops to get a degree, the purpose of which they don't understand other than you need it to apply for a job. And so when they bring that with them, if we don't shift that, it doesn't shift by itself, so metacognition doesn't - there are some McGyver's out there - but metacognition doesn't just fall out of the blue. What I would be teaching students heading into careers in medicine, or social work, or psychology, in class, I'll say, 'you aren't going to wake up one day in med school and suddenly know how to learn better - it's not going to happen. You're going to keep doing the same patterns and behavior you've done, these habits, because you know how to do that and you feel secure in that, and so that's what you keep doing. The only way we can shift that is if we begin this process of self-awareness and shifting their identity toward someone who is seeking these kinds of opportunities.'

GREG: Listening to Dr. Tolman speak about this idea of scholarly identity, it reminded me of a school I had taught at once where a number of the teachers there were unofficially expecting students to be referred to as "scholars". The thinking was that if we call them what we want them to think they are, that they'll become that in their real lives. I know there are a few schools out there still practicing this, and when I described this to Dr. Tolman, he shared an excellent insight about this particular approach.

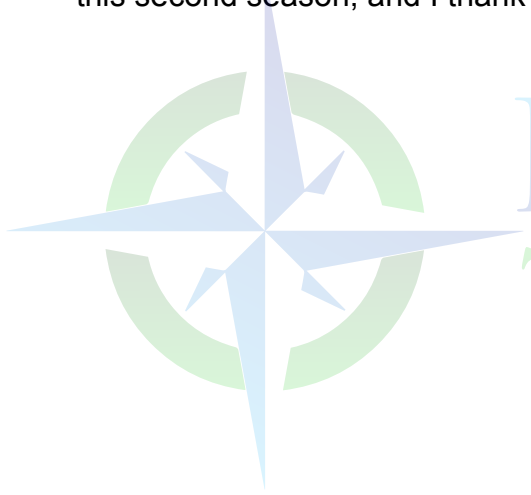
DR. TOLMAN: "There was a time in the field of counseling when they tried to use these kinds of self-affirmations, things like that, as a tool to try and produce change. The overall conclusion is that it doesn't work very well, and I think that's also true of learners. So if you just tell them to repeat these phrases, they'll magically somehow do that. But unless that word actually signals a shift in how the professor, or the teacher, and the students are interacting, and the way they're interacting, and the processes that they use, it's not going to result in any significant scholarly identity.

GREG: Now I can't help but connect what it is Dr. Tolman is describing, not just with how he approaches behavior change with this TTM model, but also the individual's self-awareness of their own thinking as well as their environment, and how that overlaps to create the kind of resistance to learning we're seeing in education; and by adding this idea of scholarly identity to the kind of teacher-student relationships we're creating, I can't help connect all of that to this idea that, if we don't make intentional efforts to address the behaviors responsible for the identities we're developing, in those learning environments we're creating, that whatever intervention you put into place is going to fall away once you remove that intervention structure, that it's not going to have that lasting change you want it to have because you're not addressing the things that are actually responsible for change in behavior to take hold long term.

It really helps me see how this idea of behaviors, and the kind of metacognitive self-awareness he's talking about, is such a crucial aspect to understanding who we are and how we learn, and when I go back to what Doni Iraheta talks about with the kinds of behaviors he helps families and children change with intention, and then go even further

back to the prior episodes which talk about social-emotional competencies, and how we're building trust, how we're building respect, how we're building responsibility, and the elements of culture like structural relationships or norms and traditions, that those outer layers become the vision for which we can then make the changes at this core of who we are - and how we learn.

So as I bring this episode to a close, I'd like to take a moment to revisit the idea I introduced at the start of this second season, where I talk about capturing a rainbow. The ranges of behaviors for different attributes and the models for behavior change discussed in this episode are not in themselves an explanation for who we are and how we learn. The topics and all of the people throughout this second season are all part of the environment responsible for this metaphorical rainbow. The question to ask is not how this episode answers our all questions about who we are and how we learn, but how the ideas presented connect with the ideas in the other episodes to help us understand ourselves as individuals and as groups in a way that's meaningful for you and your various communities both big and small, locally and globally. So I hope you're enjoying this second season, and I thank you for listening. Talk to you next time.



EXPLORING THE CORE