

Journey to Authorship

Penelope D. Keough, Psy.D.

Professor Department of Special Education National University, La Jolla,
California

Abstract

When faced with myriad subject matter to draw from, how does the professional educator choose where to begin research and scholarship. This paper will explore the steps one professor took to climb from Assistant Professor 10 years ago to Full Professor presently. The paper will reflect upon steps toward the progression of her career from teaching Action Research to novice public school teachers, to the publication of her first book, in collaboration with two other editors. *Preparing Preservice Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom* (2017), Dickensen, P. Keough, P. and Courduff, J., was a combined effort with IGI Global Publishers to support candidates seeking their Preliminary Teaching credential while teaching in the PK-12 schools. This author's journey continued with success for the first publication to a desire to continue a second publication. Hence, the book proposal submitted, *Ethical Problem Solving and Decision Making for a Positive and Conclusive Outcome*, was enthusiastically accepted in December, 2017 by IGI Global Publishers to debut in January, 2019. The presentation/publication will enlighten the audience how a keynote speaker at the Milan conference of Chinese American Scholars, Giovanni Degli Antoni, motivated this author/editor to share her knowledge of cognitive psychology to

provide a globalization-of encouragement and well-being to others suffering from what Albert Ellis calls “stinkinthinkin”.

Journey to Authorship

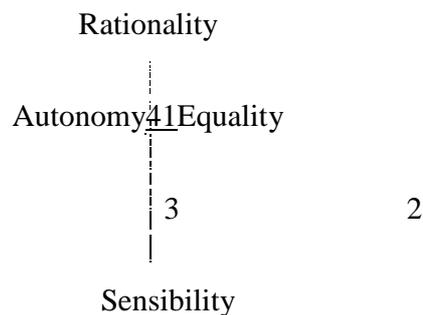
How does one begin writing a book? Does it come from the author’s passion to share the author’s viewpoints about burning issues troubling society? Does it come from the author’s desire to seek fame and fortune? Or does it come from a willingness to share past experiences, struggles and difficult decisions to propel him/her to a better, more fulfilling life, i.e. “Give back” (Antoni, 2014)? The impetus behind this author’s desire to publish *Ethical Problem Solving and Decision Making for Positive and Conclusive Outcomes* (Keough, in press), came from that last query and an inspirational speaker, Giovanni Degli Antoni, Professor Emeritus, at an E-Leader conference in Milan, Italy, June, 2014!

Professor Antoni said three times in the space of his twenty-minute allotment given at the conference. “Give back to the poor” was his mantra for service to mankind, globally (Antoni, 2014)! What this author has learned in her study of psychology in a doctoral program under Culture and Human Behavior is “service” is the highest form of happiness!

If there is an absence of service to others in one’s life, one may not know where to start! Where is the *raison d’etre* for each person and how does one find it? The journey of this author to publish the above manuscript came from a desire to find that “*raison d’etre*”, which was to give back a way to surmount difficult decisions, which, once made, did not leave the body, mind and soul depleted!

The inspiration for the answer to simplifying difficult decisions when faced with moral dilemmas and/or “politically incorrect” movement came to light from a colleague’s presentation

at a prior E-Leader conference. Why couldn't one follow a "template", a "roadmap" if you will, to make those difficult decisions or take the struggle from how to make the next forward venture in one's life? The premise of the above thought came from exposure to "The Ethics Game" (Baird, & Niacaris, 2011), which was based on 36 questions divided into 18, rationality-sensibility axis and 18 on the autonomy-equality axis.



One could empirically be placed in 1 of the 4 quadrants based on his/her values, perceptions, past-experience and/or personality. One had only to conduct a self-assessment, i.e. a self-awareness of how one made decisions in the past and where the result of the decision lead one.

For example, if a person falls in quadrant 1, Rationality-Equality, (based on self-assessment/self-awareness) one takes care in researching options (rationality) that are good for all (equality).

Quadrant 2, Equality-Sensibility, one listens to intuition (sensibility) and considers one's reputation as to how the decision will be perceived by all (equality). The third quadrant, Sensibility-Autonomy, puts values on also listening to intuition (sensibility) to determine the greatest good for the individual (autonomy) (Baird & Niacaris, 2011).

The whole purpose of examining the above quadrant, based on self-assessment/self-awareness, is to ascertain one's propensity to decision making. If one examines his/her values to

determine how one goes about solving difficult issues, then a pattern is illuminated! The only dilemmas to unravel is; did that pattern of decision making work?

The idea of seeing one's pattern in decision making is to determine whether past actions worked or lead to a downward spiral leading to depression, anxiety, or panic. Hence, this paper is based on psychological theory plus action! It is mixed with educational theory and applying one's decision making lens, i.e. values and ethics, to demons which can stifle decision making when faced with seemingly insurmountable problems.

Certainly, temptations come and go! Choices, good and bad, must be taken! How does one know what pathway to take? After deciding, the individual is often faced with the question, "Was it the right one?" The fear resides with the underlying taunt. Will it be a good or bad outcome?

Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel) captured the fear that paralyzes one from acting on any decision that could invariably impact a milestone in one's life! *Oh, the Places You Go* (1989), depicts the waiting room; "waiting for the fish to bite, waiting for the phone to ring...". Or, like Don Quixote, chasing windmills, they "wish" to take one life path, then another, allowing the wind to blow them one direction then another!

Choice is the answer that drives destiny! It is the choices we make that provides our past experiences, our present situations, and hopefully a bright future! According to B.B. Skinner, for every action there is a reaction! Behaviorism (Skinner, 1974) is based on stimulus- response! "The environment affects an organism after, as well as before, it responds" (Skinner, p. 73.) Hence, one could adopt the theory of the quadrants (Baird & Niagaris, 2011) setting the pattern of one's past efforts at decision making and the doubt, fear, anxiety, paralysis and often depression

that comes *after* the decision-making process! Choice as a necessity! According to Skinner, “Behavior is said to be put into play when a person wills to act. Willing is close to choosing, particularly when the choice is between acting or not acting; to will or to choose is evidently as unheralded as to act” (p. 53). Therefore, those in Dr. Seuss’ “waiting room” simply are willing to wait for the fish to bite, or the phone to ring; they are “willing” to not make a decision and it is their choice to simply stay there (in the waiting room) with no action to moment them to the next level – or room!

Perhaps the people in the “waiting room” are suffering from “stinkinthinkin” (Ellis, 1962). In other words, they allow their fear, anxiety, past decisions resulting in disastrous consequences or depression overtake their ability to act on a new outlook, perception, or idea that might lead them to a more fortuitous pathway.

Albert Ellis was the founder of Rational Emotive Theory (RET) that relied on some of the basic tenants of Cognitive Psychology (Beck, 1976). The cognitions [thoughts] are attached to attitudes, belief systems, and feelings. Cognitions are paired with behaviors” (Metzger, 1988, p. 49). When past attitudes, belief systems and feelings are surrounded by negativity, it creates the “ABC” affect. “Psychological tension is created when an activating event occurs (A), [the individual] applies certain beliefs about the event (B), and this leads to the consequence of emotional disruption (C)” (Atlas, 1999, p. 94). It was Ellis who fostered the notion those demoralizing thoughts could be put aside, and new, positive outcomes imagined to reverse the “stinkinthinkin”.

Ellis can be applied to the reason some people are afraid to make decisions. The lens, or pattern previously used to make decisions resulted in horrific attempts that often altered the course of their life, often for the worse! As a branch of cognitive psychology, problem solving

when it comes to making a decision involves self- monitoring and self-instruction to program oneself to eliminate the negative thought as soon as it enters one's mind or even "subconscious".

So, what has this journey to authorship been like for the person writing this paper? As noted in the first paragraph, the journey was created from a willingness to share past experiences, struggles and difficult decisions to propel to a better, more fulfilling life. At seventy-one years of age, the author has experienced over 7 decades of decisions, some negative some positive. One of the earliest decisions was to marry at the age of nineteen. This resulted in not accepting an offer by Stanford University to attend their college (negative). However, it was a marriage of twelve years blessed by two healthy children resulting in two young men gifted with numerous talents (positive). The decision to leave the twelve-year marriage in 1978 led me on a pathway of struggle, economic hardship, and abuse from the opposite gender (negative). In a form of self-defense, I then chose to better myself by returning to school and my original pathway of teaching in 1990 (positive). With that thirst for knowledge and a better life I secured a Special Education Master's Degree and credential and a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology (positive). It was the years studying culture and behavior that allowed this author to recognize how the human element can be freed from demoralizing thoughts, negativity, depression, hopelessness and anger which can often lead to paralyzing fear to decision making.

Our lives are made from the choices we make, good, bad or indifferent. The only quality of human life is we can choose again!

In the upcoming publication, *Ethical Problem Solving and Decision Making for Positive and Conclusive Outcomes* (Keough, in press), much of what skimmed the surface in this paper will be further explored. The author urges a closer, in-depth look at the process touched on in this paper, should one be so inclined!

References

Atlas, L., (1999), *Cracking the GRE Psychology*, Princeton Review Publishing, L.L.C., New York, NY

Baird, C. & Niacaris, J. (2011). Understanding the Ethical Lens Inventory. *Ethics Game*, September, 2011

Kauffman, J.M (2005) *Characteristics of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children and Youth*. Pearson. Boston, Massachusetts.

Metzger, L., (1988), *From Denial to Recovery, Counseling Problem Drinkers, Alcoholics, and Their Families*. Jossey-Bass, Inc., San Francisco, California.

Skinner, B.F., (1974). *About Behaviorism*. ALFRED A. KNOPF: New York, New York.