

# The Ownership Cycle

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“What do you own?”

When I ask this question, the universal result is a puzzled expression, followed by the inevitable reply: “Do you mean my car / house / other material possession?”

I have asked this question countless times to people of various professional and educational standing and the reply is very much the same. Some wonder whether I am looking for something else other than the instinctive, obvious reply of a material possession. They are right.

In life, half the battle is won by knowing the right questions to ask.

“What do you own?”

All of us own material possessions. The point of the question, however, is to steer one towards insight of the intangible things in life that he owns - Time, Energy, Mood.

To do something carries with it a cost: time, energy, and sometimes money. All actions carry consequences – good and bad ones. Doing nothing has consequences too. Even if we do not expend energy, time still passes; missed deadlines and wasted opportunities carry their own costs. There is no such thing as a choice without consequence. This is the reality we live in. This is the real world we can choose to live in or ignore to our detriment.

If we pause and look at ourselves and at the people around us carefully, we find that we all too often go through life oblivious to this simple truth. We deny the reality of our limited time, energy and mood. We deny the reality that our senses convey to us.

When we pretend that our angry words, dismissive attitudes, passive acceptance of events as “fate” and wasted energy all do not have consequences – we fail, or under-achieve.

Yet there are some people who live in the reality that time and energy of everyone, including themselves, is limited. They know that to “Own” their reality, they have to pay attention to all feedback, prepare accordingly, pick the optimal personal choice and thus obtain the most desirable balance of short-term and long-term benefits for themselves and their loved ones. They know that inaction carries consequences too. These people move purposefully through life, facing challenges gamely and using them to improve and become stronger. They build alliances with

equally determined and purposeful people, making the lives of those around them richer, happier and more fulfilling. How do they consistently make the right choice out of the many options they have? They take Ownership of themselves.

They take Ownership of 5 critical Aspects of their reality, and go through a self-perpetuating, always-improving, always-grounded Cycle of Ownership.

**Role** refers to the roles each of us have in life. We are members of a family, students at various stages in life, workers, perhaps bosses or leaders and friends to others too. Our degree of success in each Role depends heavily on our degree of Ownership of that role. The successful businessman who ignores his Role as spouse to his wife and father to his kids, spending little time bonding with them, can expect marital and family problems.

**Awareness** refers to three areas: awareness of our goals, situational awareness and self-awareness. Superb awareness in all 3 areas means that you are alert, pragmatic and able to complement your strengths and weaknesses with that of your allies and make full use of your environment. Conversely, without the necessary proficiency in all 3 of these areas, we may set unrealistic goals, get caught unawares by our weaknesses, or fail to notice the warning signs that tell us we are going the wrong way.

**Choices** refers to the choices we consider and make. Charging into a single choice without considering the rest is rash. The best choice is often not the easiest one to take.

**Consequences** refers to the cost, benefit and harm of each choice. When we take Ownership of our choices and the consequences, we accept the cost and are better at coming to terms with unexpected outcomes. There is no point blaming others. We also make amends to others we have inadvertently harmed.

**Future** refers to our ability to stay focused on the long-term; the future each of us will have to face. It helps us set appropriate goals, rather than reaching retirement age bankrupt and friendless. It also helps us remember not to close too many doors because we cannot foresee whose help we may need in the future.

All these Aspects determine our success in everything. To ignore a single Aspect is to invite disaster. The 5 Aspects also drive the Ownership Cycle – the Cycle that affects our natural reactions when an event occurs.

The Cycle comprises 3 steps (see Figures 1-3). Each Cycle is generally self-perpetuating, and driven by our attitude (shown in the first box of Figures 2 and 3).

The Ownership Cycle comprises Observing everything that our senses and environment tell us; then Reacting appropriately to the knowledge imparted by our observations in an appropriate, effective manner; finally Learning from the right allies and resources to make ourselves better and stronger than before. We can make mistakes like everyone else, but eventually learn to make far fewer mistakes and keep on improving.

The all-too-common, tragic No-Ownership Cycle comprises Observing what we choose to observe with our filters on; then Reacting to inadequate or biased information, often in an excessive, defensive or hostile fashion; Learning to build walls and running away from opportunities and potential

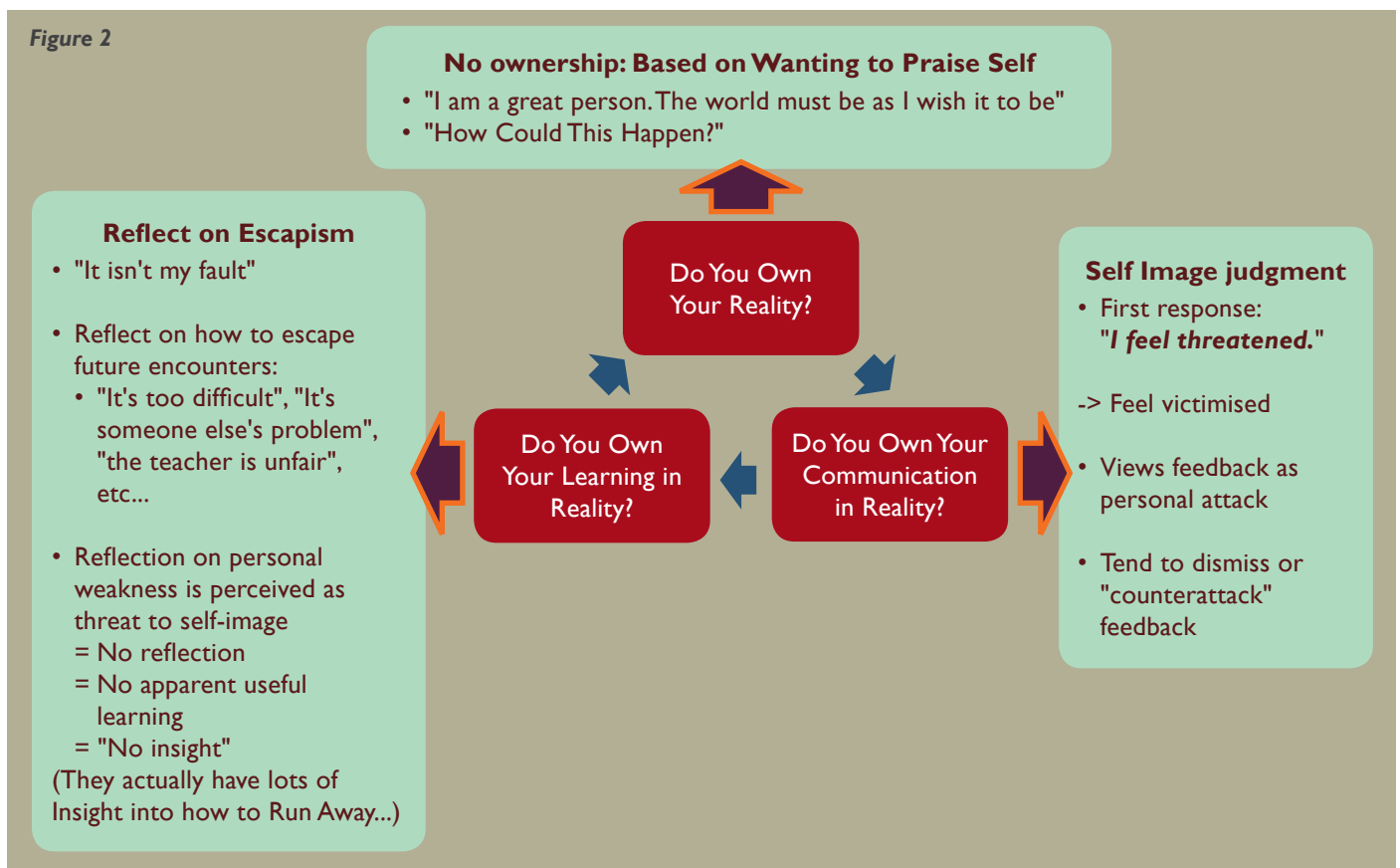
allies for the sake of living in our Comfort Zone.

How does this affect doctors and patients? Consider the following examples:

The patient who refuses his Awareness: Keeping silent about his concerns with the medicine the doctor prescribes, going home and then not taking the medicine. A common example is the patient who refuses to use topical steroids for eczema, but says nothing about his concerns during the consultation, then not using the topical steroid when it is required. The outcome is poor; the eczema worsens.

The doctor who refuses his Awareness: He is the medical expert, not the patient. He sends the patient home without any explanation of Red Flags, what to expect and what the treatment entails. Some patients are discouraged by unexpected events because there was no proper explanation.

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(continued on the next page)

(continued from Page 19: Advancing Academic Family Medicine in NUHS and Beyond ...)



The patient may go to see another doctor, suffer a poorer outcome or even complain against the original doctor.

The doctor who enters the wrong Cycle when making a diagnosis: He can unnecessarily miss diagnoses because he filters out important information as a result of his biases. Common mistakes include "target fixation" due to availability bias and practising defensive medicine by "ruling out everything unlikely" instead of trying to "make a diagnosis".

The doctor who refuses to read up and upgrade himself, keeping up with what patients search for on the Internet and advances in treatment. He runs the risk of seeming foolish or outdated if a patient comes to the clinic with knowledge of the advances or trends in medical care.

In summary, the Ownership Cycle is a system of living and learning which keeps us grounded in reality, implores us to assess our choices wisely and reminds us to learn from the consequences of our actions.

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*The Ownership Cycle* is available from Books Kinokuniya and Selectbooks Asia locally; and various online retailers such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Book Depository, and at least a half-dozen others.

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## FAMILY MEDICINE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2018

COLLEGE  
47<sup>TH</sup> AGM

28 July 2018 (Saturday)  
2.00pm

Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre  
Auditorium (Level 9)  
1 Straits Boulevard  
Singapore 018906

Family Medicine  
Commencement Ceremony 2018  
2.00 - 3.30pm ♦ Auditorium (Level 9)

Tea Reception  
3.30 - 4.00pm ♦ Foyer

College 47<sup>th</sup> AGM  
4.00 - 6.00pm ♦ Auditorium (Level 9)