

Chapter 5 Cognitive Audio-Visual Technique (CAVT)

The History

My formal introduction to Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) came in my first year of graduate school. For one of my 'theories' classes I had to purchase *The Feeling Good Handbook* - written by Dr. David Burns. One of my assignments for that class was to write a paper about my experience using one of the techniques explained in the handbook.

Before I get fully into that assignment, however, a bit about Dr. David Burns. Dr. Burns is a psychiatrist who actually studied under Aaron Beck, who is the man credited with developing Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy in the 1960s. Dr. Burns admits that he didn't set out to 'write a book', per se, he was simply interested in developing 'handouts' for his own clients to help with teaching the techniques he himself had developed to assist in conceptualizing the processes involved in CBT and making them practical to use for his clients. His efforts ultimately evolved into the **Feeling Good Handbook**, which was published in 1989, and has now sold more than 4 million copies. Dr. Burns clearly played a big roll in popularizing the concept of CBT and a big role in my personal growth and the development of my philosophies and techniques.

So, back to the assignment...

For those of you who have completed graduate school (and even if you haven't, I am sure you can imagine), there are some assignments that you 'just want to get finished' and move on. This started out as one of those for me - just another 'hoop' to 'jump through' in route to completing the program. So I dutifully went about the task of skimming through the book, trying to get the job done as quickly as I could. But as I was skimming, I kept slowing down to read more slowly and digest the information. It was capturing my interest - more than most books in my graduate course.

Dr. Burns wrote a pretty fascinating book. In the book he explains what cognitive distortions are and provides multiple different methods for creating rational responses to our own distorted thinking. If you have not read his book, I would highly recommend it.

I settled in on using a method that Dr. Burns named the Daily Mood Log. This method is a 4-step process that involves identifying ones own cognitive distortions and then creating rational responses to such. My assignment was to pick a time or situation in which my mood was low and use the chosen technique to improve my mood, then write a paper reflecting on my experiences and observations. It all seemed a bit 'hokey' at first, but I dutifully went through the steps.

I chose 'Monday mornings' as my situation, since I always seemed to be the 'most depressed' on Monday mornings. I seriously had not considered *why* I felt that way on Monday mornings, so it seemed like it might be a good fit. So the following Monday morning I began recording all of my thoughts:

- Back to work already, seems like the weekend just got started.
- The weekend flew too fast.
- It sucks to have to work so much more than I get to play, it should be the other way around.

- I would love to try, just once, not working for a living.

None of these thoughts surprised me too much, nor did any of them seem all that distorted. They seemed to just be 'true' statements about my experience. I thought the exercise was going to be pretty boring after all. But then, as I was backing out of my driveway, I glanced at my neighbor's lawn - perfectly manicured - and then back at mine - not so much. I had raced to get it mowed before taking off to a little league game and had not had time to edge or sweep. All of a sudden I felt that pit in my stomach, that wave of depression washing into my head. And then, loud and clear, I heard it - "YOU LAZY SHIT! You could have done that when you got home, but no, you chose to sit on your porch and drink a beer." (Oh, it didn't stop there either.) "What are your neighbors thinking? They all must be getting together and talking about you and how you can't even take care of your own lawn. Everyone else found the time to edge and sweep. What is the matter with you?"

The crazy part is that my thoughts seemed so real, and so logical. Had I not been actively looking for it, I never would have questioned it one bit. But not this time, I put the car in park and reached for a notebook and wrote those thoughts down. On my drive to work that morning, I began thinking about the gravity of those thoughts and how distorted they really were. Here I was, working full time, going to graduate school full time, running 6 kids, ages 4-13 to every activity under the sun, trying to manage a home and yard, and taking the time to relax and drink a beer instead of edging my lawn made me 'lazy'? Wow! And the more I listened, the more I heard. I had a virtual 'library' of self-critical thought that commentated on my 'laziness' quite a lot. I was blown away.

I won't bore you with the rest of the details of that assignment, but suffice it to say - it was an 'eye-opener'. I was not a newcomer to the world of trying to journal 'better' thinking, but this exercise had really helped me to expose a set of cognitive distortions that had 'remained hiding in plain sight'. As I have now come to understand so intimately in my work, this is usually the nature of our worst distortions, they are 'hidden' in our subconscious. And until we perform an activity to smoke them out, they will remain that way.

I was a believer in the process before, but this really caught me on fire. I could hardly believe how much my mood improved that morning when I offered up a rational response to my diabolical distortion. I continued to use Dr. Burns methods throughout my graduate program. They became my favorite tools to teach to my clients throughout my practicum and internship experiences.

As fabulous as the tools were, I noticed something that bothered me. I still was in a low mood on Monday mornings. When I noticed it, I could 'think' my way back to a better mood by reminding myself of the 'rational responses' I had written down - that was cool - but why was my brain still so insistent on creating the 'lazy' perspective? I had written down my rational responses, reminded myself of all of the things that I was doing, written down the fact that 'lazy' was really quite the opposite of an accurate description of me - yet my brain persisted in launching the idea that not getting everything done I wanted to made me lazy. I knew better, but my brain persisted with the distorted perception. Was I doing something wrong? I thought I had created the best rational responses, but maybe not?? I just couldn't figure out why my brain was so insistent on paying attention to illogical, distorted thinking.

Don't get me wrong, it was nice to be able to work my way out of a poor mood by concentrating on some rational responses, but if my brain kept continuing to launch my distorted thinking, had I

really changed my thinking? This question haunted me for the rest of my graduate program - especially because I kept finding myself looking at my performance in a distorted way. I seemed to keep focusing on the things I didn't get done, rather than focusing on the vast majority of things I did get done, and would conclude that I was lazy, not doing enough, or not keeping up with the program - even though I was getting straight A's.

I would try so hard to 'think hard' about the rational perspective I had written down, but the minute I wasn't paying attention, my brain would run back to the 'default' thought - that I was a lazy shit. I was becoming a bit disenchanted with the whole process. While, yes, I was able to pull myself out of a bad mood (that was great), I reasoned there had to be more. How do I not get into the bad mood in the first place? How to get the distorted thoughts to not launch at all - period?

I further reasoned that I was putting a lot more effort into this than my typical clients (all of them actually), and if I was still struggling with distorted thoughts that launched first, they were struggling all the more. I had done the work and was continuing to refer back to the rational responses in my mind, but those pesky distorted thoughts just seemed to continue to dominate my brain. Why was my rational response not becoming dominant?

At times I reasoned that I should just be happy with knowing how to work myself out of a bad mood and not get so anal about striving to *not* let the bad mood occur in the first place, but something kept nagging at my mind. Wouldn't real change be if the rational thoughts dominated my thinking?

In 2002, the year I graduated from my masters program, I had a 'eureka' moment. I was reading a Reader's Digest article on stress, and something caught my brain. The article cited a book called *Synaptic Self*, by Joseph LeDoux. To this day I cannot tell you what exactly triggered my brain. I still have the actual magazine, and even reading the article today I can't figure out what exactly implored me to find out more, but something told me this book just might have the answer to my burning question: Why is my rational response not becoming dominant?

After reading the article I did something I had never done before - I went out to the internet and ordered the book, sight unseen. I just had to have it. When it arrived 5 days later, I was excited to open it up and dive in. It turned out to be one of the most boring books I have ever read - but I couldn't put it down. Leaping off the pages, in dry, scientific, way too wordy (sorry Joseph) narrative were the answers to my burning question. It was all about synapses. Everything, and I do mean everything, about the human experience is governed by synapse production - or lack thereof. I began to understand that thoughts are really synapses, arranged in clusters of neural circuits that either fire or don't. It was all starting to make perfect sense. I simply had not created a strong enough rational circuit in my brain to stand a chance at rivaling the 'distorted circuit' that had been living there and growing there for a long time. It was all about synapse production. It was math, chemistry, paths of least resistance and signal strength. The name for it, collectively, was **neuro-plasticity**. Now I was getting excited.

I realized what was happening. The brain doesn't pay attention to logic after all, it pays attention to the strongest signal - even if the strongest signal is illogical and even if I *know* that. This changed everything for me. Here I had been thinking all along, like most of the rest of the world, that knowing a better way to think was the ticket. It may be the ticket, but only the ticket. If we

actually want to **punch** that ticket, there is a lot of work left to do. I realized in an instant the mistake I had made. I had assumed the creating rationale thought was enough. How silly of me, really? If rational thought were enough then there probably wouldn't be any over-weight people. It is a pretty rational idea to just eat the right amount of food - right?

This was a game-changer for me. I realized that rationalizing distorted thought isn't enough. It buys you the ticket, but now you have to find a way to get the ticket punched. And that became my mission and ultimately my passion - to really, truly be able to **punch the ticket!**

From that day forward I have read everything I can get my hands on that involves neuro-biology, neuro-plasticity - neuro-*anything*. I realized that the key to changing thoughts is to really understand how the brain works and devise strategies to 'beat the brain at it's own game' so to speak.

That was 2002. What I am going to present to you in the rest of this chapter has been 12 years in the making.

The Early Years.

From the moment I read Synaptic Self I got right to work devising ways to make my preferred ways of thinking dominant in my brain. I had my *ticket* already, so I went back to my grad-school assignment and began working with the rational responses I had created. In the process I realized that there was a rather sizeable gap between *having a ticket* and *getting it punched*.

If what Joseph had written about was correct, then all I had to do was create enough synapses in my '**I am a hard worker**' circuit to displace my '**I am a lazy shit**' circuit. So what was the fastest way to build synapses? I reasoned that 'writing' a preferred thought took more synapses. I learned from Joseph that every thought counts. This was different from what I had assumed (at least I think it was different from what I had assumed - I guess I never really thought about it.) Each and every thought counts - to the tune of tens of thousands of synapses per thought. Furthermore, each time a neuron is fired a growth factor is secreted causing the growth of more dendrites (remember the spindly appendages from Chapter 4), making that neuron poised and ready to complete tens of thousands of new synapses the next time the neuron is fired. Writing requires the engagement of the entire cerebral cortex (also Chapter 4), so I set about writing, and writing, and writing.

It worked. I simply wrote out my rational responses - over and over again - until my fingers were ready to fall off. Previously I was only invoking the rational thoughts in response to 'hearing' the distorted ones. Now I was doing it regardless. I would write them down in the morning, write them down again in the evening, and many times in between. Every spare moment I devoted to writing. And I wasn't *just* writing, I was trying to focus hard on what I was writing - keeping my mind free of any distractions (which, by the way is so much easier when you are writing than it is if you are simply trying to think the preferred thoughts). I treated each sentence as a practice stroke, just like taking a practice swing in baseball or golf. I don't know for sure how many times I wrote the rational responses, I wasn't counting, but I know I filled up several spiral bound notebooks with only my preferred thoughts.

I had a pretty good idea that my work would pay off, based on the neuro-science I had learned, but I suppose there was a bit of skepticism. That is until one day when I noticed something strange but wonderful happen in my brain. My brain tried to launch the 'lazy shit' idea and the 'hard worker' idea came flying out of no-where and smoked the 'lazy shit' idea. It felt magical. I was stoked. I had proven to myself that my theory about synapses was correct. I now had a logical thought in my head that was truly strong enough to do battle with the distorted thought - and win.

If Joseph was right, my distorted thought should now begin to atrophy as my brain would begin 'borrowing' neuro-peptides and neuro-transmitters from the 'lazy shit' circuit to continue building the 'hard worker' circuit. And again, Joseph was right. The more repetitions, the better it got until finally the 'hard worker' circuit was launching first, and the 'lazy shit' circuit was becoming a weak, second-hand, whisper.

So Dr. Burns had given me the tools to 'buy the ticket', creation of the preferred thoughts - and Joseph had given me the concepts to understand how to 'punch that ticket' - practice, practice, practice. For the next 3 years I filled notebook after notebook with my preferred thoughts, learning, enjoying and basking in the goodness of rational thinking.

The only problem was that it took up a lot of my time. I didn't mind myself, because I was seeing good results, but I was running into the problem of getting my clients to 'buy in' to the process of writing down preferred thoughts - at least Long enough to see results. I reasoned that seeing results would create the motivation to continue doing it.

One problem was getting clients to see the value of even trying to write down a preferred thought. I had no evidence, except for my own experience, to prove that repetitively writing a preferred thought was going to yield the desired results. So I began looking for research to support my claim. I found some research in the writings of Malcolm Gladwell. In his book *Outliers* he posits that it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to become an Outlier, or a phenomenon in a discipline or skill. That was good news, and bad at the same time. Good support for having to spend a large amount of time practicing *anything* to get good at it - including not just sports or music, but also thinking about ourselves in a better way as they both involve the firing of circuits in the brain and connection of new synapses. But bad in that 10,000 hours seemed daunting.

I had the comfort of knowing I had accomplished it in way less than 10,000 hours, but then I also reasoned that we are not necessarily needing to be a phenomenon at thinking better thoughts, we simply have to reach a point of dominance - that should take a lot less time. So I pared 10,000 hours down to 10,000 strokes. Of course those would only be estimates. The real number would depend on how many strokes had gone in to building the distorted circuit. When I look back on my grad school days, no wonder the 'lazy shit' circuit had so much dominance, I had thought that way thousands of times and my rational responses had been practiced less than 100 times. At that rate I was never going to 'catch up' to the distorted circuit.

So now I had some evidence, but how was I going to sell the idea to clients? As excited as I was about it, I could easily get client's attention. They were all about creating the rational responses, but the practice piece was another story. Very few wanted to carry a notebook around with them.

Those that did, invariably lost it, forgot it, etc. Most people were giving up on the effort long before they created dominant rational circuits in the brain. I reasoned that I had to find a way to generate more momentum in my clientele.

The Cell Phone Revolution

From 2002-2007 I kept perfecting my processes, getting better and better at helping clients to learn how to rationalize their own distorted thoughts and encouraging them to write down their preferred thoughts. Some clients did phenomenally well, but others struggled with staying interested and focused on the task itself. But one thing I did notice is that they were ALWAYS super interested in who was texting them. This period of time also represented the explosion of the texting phenomenon. In 2000 the average number of text messages a month was 35, by 2007 Americans were sending more text messages per month than phone calls, but it was still only about 65 per month per subscriber. Today, the average teenager sends about 4000 texts per month. In 2007 Apple launched the iPhone and it was 'game on' for everyone. Everything exploded.

As I sat in my therapy office during those years, watching people 'jones-ing' to answer a text, glued to their screens, literally tethered to their devices, I kept thinking: "If only I could tap into a bit of that focus, that interest, that motivation..." How do I get 'therapy' into a cell phone? It seemed like a pipe dream at the time, but I couldn't let it go. There had to be a way!

Now I myself had mixed emotions about texting at first. So I have to admit I was a bit miffed about the exploding interest in such. In fact it wasn't until I opened my own private practice in 2008 that I finally broke down and bought a phone with a key-board and joined the texting world. My teenage kids were all 'cell-phone' owners and I really needed to have an unlimited texting plan just to survive, furthermore, many of my clients wanted to communicate via text - so I jumped in.

I soon fell in love with the practice of texting and once again the wheels began turning in my head. I have 'journalled' daily for the past 15 years, which I want to point out again is writing the preferred thoughts only. Journaling is not a cathartic activity, which purges bad thoughts out of the head by writing them down. It is a neuro-plastic activity which generates new growth of preferred circuitry in the brain by practicing the preferred ways of thinking. For the first 5 or so of those years it was pen and paper, the next 5 were mostly computer generated, and then came texting. I had joined the ranks of one who always had his cell phone on his person, and therefore I always had access to a tiny keyboard that I could use to journal my thoughts, 160 characters at a time. I really started to like it.

I was slow at texting at first, but that wasn't a bad thing, I actually had to concentrate more to text out a preferred thought. I would then send that thought back to myself. It was pretty cool to catch myself thinking a distorted thought, stop in the moment, text the rational response or preferred thought, send it out into cyber space and moments later have it show up in my inbox, where I would of course open it up, read it, and smile. There was something really powerful about that process and I began teaching my clients to do it. I coined the term '**jexting**' to signify journaling-texting. It was a big hit. Clients now had their journals in their pockets - always. They could look at old texts, generate new ones, send them again and again - it was a really cool way to amplify the signal. Each piece of the process, from generating the thought, to texting it, to sending

it, to receiving it and reading it, generated additional sets of synapses. It was fun, meaningful, efficient, more powerful (in terms of cognitive horsepower) which is what we want in the game of building a dominant circuit - and it was being done on a cellphone, the device that people already love to use and have with them 24/7.

Once I started Jexting myself, I was hooked. I loved everything about it. I could capture distorted thoughts anywhere and create new ones anywhere. Nobody ever asked me what I was doing when I was texting, they simply assumed I was texting. So it was private, incognito and efficient. I loved sending them back to myself, opening them and reading them. To this day I still have a hard time not smiling when a great idea, that I sent to myself, appears in my inbox. (As of today I still use the technique, only now I have an app on my phone that allows me to send that same text to myself as many times as I would like. It is called TextMinder and I can send any thought - up to 140 characters - hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, even yearly and there is no limit to how many ideas I want repeating at any given time. Ah, the wonders of modern technology.) I also learned that I could text ideas to my email account, so I could keep them and put them in a Word document.

In graduate school I would often 'write' entire papers while driving a car - yep, probably not a good idea in today's world of texting and driving difficulties, but it worked beautifully. It all began one day when I was experiencing some tremendous 'writer's block' and I got so frustrated I went for a drive just to 'clear my head'. I happened to have left a micro-cassette recorder in my car, which I was using for a totally separate project (we had to turn in tapes of ourselves practicing counseling phrases and skills). As I drove, ideas started to flow and I picked up the recorder. I had intentionally found a straight, deserted, country road and I just kept driving. 2 hours later, my paper was done - completely - I only had to go back and type it. I don't know what it is about driving, but driving gets my ideas flowing. One day I was driving to work and the ideas were flowing and I wished I had that old tape recorder with me - then it dawned on me - I had discovered that under the 'sounds' menu on my cell phone I could record my voice. I found it buried in the sound menu and it worked. I could record dozens of little voice clips on my phone old *dumb* phone. Now, of course, my iPhone has a voice memo feature, but back in 2008 I was still 4 years away from getting an iPhone. So I would use my dumb phone to record these clips and then I could listen to them and/or type them out later.

So now I had preferred thoughts texted into my phone that I could read, re-text, or re-send to myself and I had preferred thoughts on audio-tape that I could listen to anywhere I wanted. I started carrying ear buds with me in case I wanted to listen in public.

I now had multiple ways to practice my preferred thinking and my library of preferred thoughts was growing by leaps and bounds and best of all I had them with me all the time - right on my phone. Any down time I had, riding my exercise bike, waiting in line, driving, boring meetings, commercials, etc. was a great time to practice. My *journaling* was now getting done in the white spaces of my day, in the margins of my life - this was fantastic for a busy guy like me. I found more and more places to squeeze my 'practice' sessions into my schedule. And, of course, I was teaching these to my clients as I tested them out and mastered them myself.

From 2008-2012 I sent countless texts to self and to my email, I spoke and listened to hundreds of voice-memos and taught my clients to do the same. I had clearly brought the cell-phone into the therapy process and was increasing the signal strength of each passing stroke (over writing in a notebook) by leaps and bounds. By the time I stroked one thought in all of the various ways I could, - writing, texting, reading, speaking, hearing - I estimate that I was increasing the signal strength of each preferred thought by a factor of 10, all with my silly little dumb phone. The best was yet to come.

Smart Phones

In 2012 I needed a new phone. My renewal was up and they were offering the iPhone at Verizon for \$100. It wasn't the price of the phone, but the idea of buying data each month that created the hesitancy, but by then I had been in private practice for 4 years and business was good, so I took the leap. Wow! Why didn't I do that sooner? Within the first month I had already saved enough time (and time is money), to pay for the whole year's worth of data. What a paradigm shift for me, but that is a whole different story for a different day. The story for today is that all of sudden I had a smart phone in my arsenal - a flipping therapeutic juggernaut and I didn't even know it yet.

In May of 2012 I auditioned to give a TED talk for TEDx Fort Wayne. I got the gig and found my anxiety climbing as the gravity of the gig sunk in. If you don't know, a TED talk is a pretty prestigious thing to get to do. It involves speaking to an audience about a topic for a fixed amount of time, from 8 minutes to 18 minutes, depending on the time slot you get issued. I had 8 minutes to address my topic - *Developing Visionary Thinking*. You are out there on stage, no notes, no podium, just you and the audience. You have 8 minutes to give them your best. They have paid good money to come and see you speak - they are expecting something good. The talk is taped, live, and becomes the property of TED International. They then own the footage. It goes to their website and to YouTube. Good or bad, you only get one shot and it is out there forever. If you have never tried to do something like this, let me tell you it is not easy. 8 minutes is infinitely harder than 2 hours. You have to be precise, rehearsed, on top of it. There is a big clock at the back of the room counting down your time. It is intense - to say the least.

Since it was such a big deal for me, I decided I should probably video-tape myself and have a look at just how I was performing. I have been taped before, but had never really taped myself practicing a performance. But hey, with my iPhone it was pretty easy. I even had a built-in kick stand on my phone case. So I set it up, hit play and went for it. What I was really looking for was body language, inflection, any annoying movements, nervous tics, etc. and of course to make sure I hit the 8 minute mark. It worked like a charm. I was able to critique my performance, make adjustments, and shoot it again, and again until I got it right. What happened next was totally unplanned and unexpected.

The first few times I shot myself on video and watched it I hated it. My voice sounded weird, I looked weird to myself, it was really uncomfortable at first. But the more I practiced, the less weird it felt - which stands to reason. What I hadn't anticipated was how much this accelerated my mastery of the speech. I was blown away. I had never mastered a presentation that quickly - ever. And my anxiety decreased with each passing stroke. I reasoned that the acceleration was coming from watching myself in action - there was no other explanation. Furthermore, once I got to the

point that I had a tape that was a 'keeper' I had 8 minutes of my best performance - timing was great, no mistakes, no stray mannerisms, a look on my face that matched how I wanted to feel doing it, etc. Anywhere I had 8 minutes I could literally practice my speech by watching it on my phone. I could put my ear buds in and practice at the mall, in a waiting room (don't tell God, but I even practiced once at church). We have known for a long time that mental rehearsal is a great way to practice something - imagining the perfect performance in one's head - and this was simply the electronic version of mental rehearsal. It was powerful beyond my comprehension and I hadn't really planned on using it this way at all. As I reflected on what was happening, I reasoned that the power was being derived from the fact that I was firing so many additional neurons per 'practice stroke' to power my eyes, my ears. Visual and auditory processing are very costly in terms of processing power, which again is what we are after when building a preferred circuit.

The proverbial 'light bulb' went off in my head. If watching video of myself practicing a performance was this powerful, why not shoot a video of myself practicing my preferred thoughts and add this to my arsenal of weapons I could use to amplify the signal even more powerfully in my brain? So the next opportunity I had I gave it a try.

My First CAVT Selfie

In my line of work I deal with attorneys - too often for my liking. My 'run-ins' with attorneys ~~sometimes~~ most times don't end well. Attorneys are sometimes after information that is protected and I am not giving it up. Attorneys don't like to hear the word 'no' so they sometimes put on their bully pants and come after me. I have been threatened to have my license suspended, my practice shut down, sued, reported to the board, you name it. Of course it has never happened (because I am protected and am doing what I am supposed to be), but that doesn't stop the anxiety from creeping up a bit.

Shortly after my TED talk I got a letter from an attorney requesting information that I can't and won't share. My brain kicked on the anxiety and I determined this was a great opportunity to try my first Cognitive Video Selfie. So I sat down and wrote out my preferred thoughts, which I derived directly from rationalizing my distorted thoughts (like the illogical thought that maybe they *could* take my license), and went for it. It was astonishing - to say the least. My anxiety diminished significantly from the very first viewing of me, calmly stating the rational thoughts I know I *should* be thinking in this situation. (I actually have this tape on my website if you'd like to view it.)

I was hooked from the very first try. This was the ultimate tool to accelerate construction of a preferred circuit. This was mental rehearsal on steroids. This was journaling X 10. I knew right then I had hit the veritable 'mother-lode' of cognitive strategies. It was going to be big. This is what I had been thinking about for 10 years, and here I was, staring at it - me, on my phone, on video, in the palm of my hand, telling me just what I needed to be thinking about - sweet!!

In the two years since I began this project I have searched diligently for research to support the efficacy of this approach. I know that it works, there's no doubt about that, I have my own experience and the experience of many clients since then as ample proof that this is a powerful

technique. But quite frankly, I know of nobody else who is using this technique. So after due diligence to investigate, and finding nothing like it, I am claiming this as my original technique, which I have named Cognitive Audio Video Technique (**CAVT**). I have also begun doing my own research. If you are interested in reviewing some of that research, visit my website at www.takechargecounseling.org and view my **OBX Project**.

Now, granted, I wasn't able to find any statistics on how video impacts cognitive behavioral strategies, but here are some related statistics that I was able to find.

- Video promotion is over 6 times more effective than print and online
- 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000X faster in the brain than text
- **55%** of communication is body language, **38%** is the tone of voice, and **7%** is the actual words spoken.
- The information retained in one minute of online video is equal to about 1.8 million written words. That's a big number that should make you sit up and take notice. That's the value of one minute of video, according to Dr. James McQuivey of Forrester Research.

Do you have the time and energy to write 1.8 million words? That's the equivalent of 3,600 typical web pages. If you write an average of one web page an hour, it would take you 150 days of writing to achieve the impact of one minute of video. If these numbers are even close to accurate, think of the implications this has for 'catching up' with the signal output generated by our dominant distorted thoughts? If Malcolm Gladwell was correct about 10,000 hours, then these numbers about video are great news.

In my research I have discovered that the average number of separate thoughts I can fit in one minute of video is roughly 10 thoughts. I have sampled some random selections of written thoughts and found the average number of words needed to complete a thought is about 15. It takes me about 20 seconds to type 15 words, so about 45 wpm - which is pretty average. So in one minute of typing, which I can do faster than I can hand-write, I am only at 45 words - compared to 1.8 million in video? That is an astonishing difference. No wonder I am seeing and experiencing such great results from video.

So how long, then, might it take - on average - to build a new neural circuit that would be capable of dominating a distorted circuit in the brain? By doing a little math I have boiled that down to viewing a 1-minute video, 10X/day, for 100 days which works out to viewing roughly 10,000 thoughts over that time frame. At 10 minutes a day we are talking about 16.6 total hours of viewing. I arrived at this estimate in two ways. First I calculated that watching video (as opposed to just trying to imagine), was about 10 times more powerful, given the exponentially greater effort involved. Second I observed my own efforts and those of my clients. I now have a growing number of clients who have reported the phenomenon of 'suddenly hearing' the preferred circuit dominating the brain. This typically happens around the 100-day mark - on average, if engaged in the process at least 10 minutes per day. It appears that Gladwell's and McQuivey's research are spot-on.

Lessons from the King of Beers

Even if Galdwell and McQuivey are a bit off in their calculations, I can always look to Budweiser to confirm the power of video. In February 2014 Budweiser spent \$4.5 million for a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl. Why? Because it pays huge dividends. Budweiser makes 3 times their money back. And just what are they buying? 30 seconds of your and my *thoughts*, molded to their precise specifications, to influence the perspective of the viewer. Is it necessary that one believes that Budweiser is a great beer prior to seeing the commercials? Of course not. Advertisers have used these tactics for years to influence buying habits, and they pay dearly for them. In today's world, with video capability at our fingertips (literally), most of us hold that kind of power in our hands every single day in the form of a smart phone, and I am super excited about extracting that power for something other than selling beer.

Daniel Coyle, in his book *The Talent Code* (a highly recommended read) writes about his quest to isolate the factor(s) that produce mega-talent in unlikely places. He visited soccer camps in Brazil, tennis academies in Germany, music schools in New York - all of which produced crazy big numbers of mega-stars in their respective disciplines, relatively speaking, way above the average. As Daniel freely admits, he didn't find what he expected. He expected to find dedication, long hours of practice, disciplined coaching - which of course were part of the effort - but what he didn't expect to find he came to identify as 'Deep Practice'. Deep Practice refers to the way that these 'talent hotbeds' approach the acquisition of skill. Daniel does a great job of explaining how 'all skill is acquired through building circuits in the brain via repeated practice of highly specific - and sometimes atypical - processes'. I couldn't agree more. Whether the skill is hitting a tennis ball, or thinking a more rational thought, both require a specific form of practice - deep practice. I am not going to go any further into the concept of 'deep practice' right here than to say that creating a video-tape of one's self speaking the rationalized version of one's own distorted thinking, *CAVT*, is the 'deep practice' of cognitive strategy.

Weird On Tape

Most people get a little 'weirded out' about hearing and/or seeing themselves on tape. I have to admit, it does feel a bit weird at first to hear one's self or see one's self on tape. But why is that? We hear the sound of our own voice every day, every time we speak, and we generally see ourselves everyday when we look in the mirror. We may not like what we see, but we don't get weirded out. So what gives?

One theory is that our brains pick up on the subtle differences in perspective. Sound from a tape is not the same sound we hear bouncing off objects to get back to our ears and video is the *actual* image, not a mirror image. Since no one is perfectly symmetrical, our brains know that the image we are seeing on tape is not the same as the one we see in the mirror. The resulting reaction is: "That doesn't sound/look like me. I don't like what I sound like or look like." This seems to be the universal reaction.

How accurate these theories may or may not be really doesn't matter that much to me. What matters is that our brains are very good at reconciling these differences and after a dozen or two viewings the weirdness vanishes. We just have to be willing to get through that weirdness phase and know it will vanish. It is a small price to pay for the powerful results one will enjoy.

Another problem is unfamiliarity with technology. Obviously people are getting more used to it now because of the number of smart phones in use. Approximately 2/3 of Americans now have smart phones. Further, there are many applications to process video footage. I happen to use iMovie, but only because I bought a MacBook and the program came with it. One trip out to the internet to watch a tutorial and I was off and running. I have processed dozens of clips in iMovie, added titles, transitions, music, still pictures - it truly is a 'drag and drop' environment and very user friendly. Uploading these videos to YouTube is a breeze. Everything is just pretty doggone easy these days.

Now of course *what* to shoot on the video is the question? That is really what my seminars are all about, helping to get people to the point where they are creating their own 1-minute videos? It takes some coaching and skill to get from distorted thinking to the deep practice videos of **CAVT**.

My goal is to help folks create their own video, complete with their voices, their video, their music, their pictures, and their ideas. If you would like to sign up for a seminar, please shoot me an email or text indicating that you would like information on upcoming events and seminars.

In summary, **CAVT** is a technique developed to bridge the gap between knowing how to rationalize distorted thinking (the ticket) and creating dominant thought process in the brain that have enough signal strength to compete with and ultimately displace distorted thought (punching the ticket). We know from brain research that distorted circuits in the brain will eventually atrophy, but only when the preferred circuit is fired more frequently and more vehemently than the distorted circuit. **CAVT** is a technique that gets the job done exponentially quicker and more efficiently than anything previously attempted. **CAVT** is the mental equivalent of 'deep practice' and is the ultimate 'power tool' for using CBT.