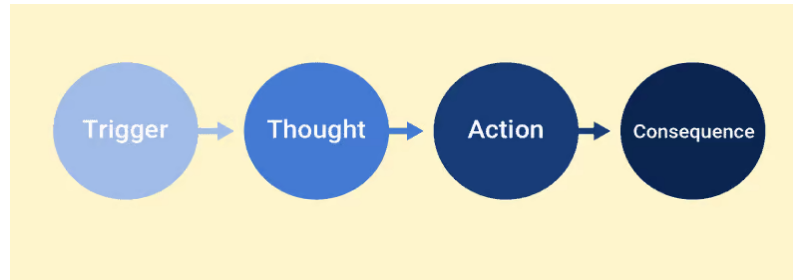


Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

The Behavior Chain



The Trigger Stage:

The stage in which an event, feeling or thing starts the thought process.

Example: The smell of cinnamon starts the thought of how much you love cinnamon rolls.

We see an example of this trigger stage in the bible when David sees Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 11:2 One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing— a very beautiful woman.

The Thought stage:

This is the stage in which our thoughts can justify our next behavior or control it.

In the example of David he acts on that trigger. 2 Samuel 11: 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

The Behavior stage:

Behaviors are the actions you take (or don't take), which ultimately become habits.

In the example given David took his action. 2 Samuel 11:4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

The Consequence Stage:

In this stage, the behavior is either reinforced or undermined

In David's example his behavior leads to an unintended pregnancy, being caught in a situation of lies, having Bathsheba's husband killed and losing his son to God's punishment.

It is important to realize that all temptations start with a trigger and those triggers are identifiable.

Types of Triggers:

environmental, - Your surroundings or things that are introduced to you

mental, - Remembering to do something or how you should act, or predicting how things could be

emotional, - based on the current state of feeling or feeling about others

social, - influenced by how others are acting or participating in an activity

Biological - a smell, taste, touch or other factor that elicits an involuntary response

The good news is though triggers or temptations exist everywhere there are things we can do to prevent them from leading to undermining behaviors and negative consequences.

1. **Prayer and Meditation:** Ask God to give you the strength to overcome
2. **Control your environment:** An alcoholic may need to change his route home to avoid driving past the liquor store. Don't expose yourself to places that you know may trigger the temptations you are dealing with.
Example: Bathing on the roof was a common "privacy" practice and King David being on the roof of his palace would have been able to see anyone bathing around him. Stay off the roof!
3. **Prepare and practice your response to a temptation ahead of time:** Be prepared with an answer or action when triggers come. Jesus did this in Luke the 4th chapter when the devil tempted him with turning rocks into bread. Though Jesus was no doubt hungry after 40 days of starving he was prepared with the word, "it is written, man shall not live by bread alone.
4. **Narrow down your triggers and temptations:** We may have dozens of temptations but narrow down the ones that effect your spiritual life and your family to the "big three" and focus on them. Avoiding a second cup of coffee is not as important as avoiding drug use by not hanging out with a known drug dealer. What three things are you struggling with the most now that you can give to God?

5. **Take at least 5 deep breaths:** This buys time (even if its seconds) to provide some clarity and visualize the consequence that will happen after your behavior.
6. **Interrupt the thought:** This can happen in many ways. A 5 second prayer, stamping your foot on the ground, visualizing a stop sign or audibly saying “NO!” can help you to stop the behavior chain that could lead to a negative consequence.
7. **Change the atmosphere (or in other words, run!):** Often the most efficient way to disrupt the behavior chain is to just leave. There was no greater example of this than Joseph in Genesis 39: 11 But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

Conclusion: The bible is full of good people that were overcome by their temptations or triggers in their behavior chain like David, Sampson, and Peter yet all of them were able to move past their failures through prayer. We must also remember that the scripture is also full of men and women that broke the behavior chain and did not give into temptations like Job, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Paul, and of course Jesus that turned to prayer as their means of breaking the behavior chain and not giving in to temptation. In the words of our lord Jesus, “and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”