



# Life Lessons from Humanistic Behaviorism:

Bringing the best out of  
yourself and others

By E. Scott Geller, Ph.D.

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# E

Scott Geller, Ph.D, is an Alumni Distinguished Professor in the Department of Psychology at

Virginia Tech. For more than four decades, Professor Geller has taught and conducted research as a faculty member and director of the Center for Applied Behavior Systems in the Department of Psychology. He has authored, edited or co-authored 36 books, 82 book chapters, 39 training programs, 259 magazine articles, and more than 300 research articles addressing the development and evaluation of behavior change interventions to improve quality of life on a large scale. His most recent book: *Applied Psychology: Actively Caring for People*, defines Dr. Geller's entire research, teaching, and scholarship career at Virginia Tech, which epitomizes the VT logo: Ut Prosim—"That I May Serve".

His popular books in occupational health and safety include: *The Psychology of Safety; Working Safe; Understanding Behavior-Based Safety; Building Successful Safety Teams; Beyond Safety Accountability: How to Increase Personal Responsibility; The Psychology of Safety Handbook; Keys to Behavior-Based Safety from Safety Performance Solutions; The Participation Factor; People-Based Safety: The Source; and People-Based Patient Safety: Enriching your culture to prevent medical error*, coauthored by Dave Johnson, *Leading People-Based Safety: Enriching your culture*, published by Coastal Training Technologies Corporation. His two latest books are entitled *The Courage to Actively Care* and *The Motivation to*

*Actively Care*, both coauthored by Bob Veazie.

Dr. Geller is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science, the International Association of Behavior Analysis, and the World Academy of Productivity and Quality Sciences. He is past Editor of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (1989-1992), current Associate Editor of *Environment and Behavior* (since



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1982), and current Consulting Editor for *Behavior and Social Issues*, *The Behavior Analyst Digest*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, and *EHS Today*.

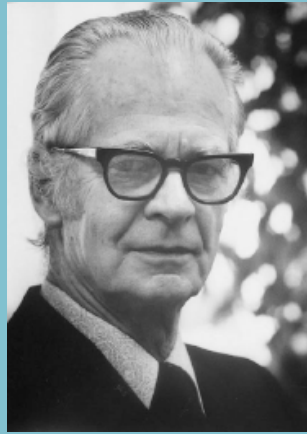
Dr. Geller and his colleagues at SPS have worked with numerous organizations, both public and private, to tailor training and implementation efforts related to the psychology of safety. Past customers include both small and large organizations representing manufacturing, chemical processing, transportation, and service industries, including: Allied Signal, American Standard, ARCO Chemical, AT&T, Bayer, Bechtel, BF Goodrich, BHP Cooper, Cargill, Coca-Cola, Champion International, Chevron, Corning, ExxonMobil, Eli Lilly, Ford, General Motors, Georgia-Pacific, Hercules, Hewlett-Packard, Koch Refining, Leprino Foods, Lockheed, Lucent

Technologies, Monsanto, Pacificorp, Power Bar, Rohm and Haas, Solutia, Textron, 3M, Toyota, Union Pacific Railroad, Wal-Mart, Westinghouse, Westvaco, and Weyerhaeuser.

Dr. Geller has been the Principal Investigator for more than 75 research grants involving the application of behavioral science for the benefit of corporations, institutions, government agencies, or communities in general. Both government agencies and corporations have funded his research, including: the National Science Foundation; the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the U.S. Department of Energy; the U.S. Department of Transportation; the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; General Motors Research Laboratories; the Alcoholic Beverage Medical Research Foundation; and the Virginia Departments of Energy, Transportation, Litter Control, Agriculture and Commerce, and Welfare and Institutions.

He has received lifetime achievement awards from the International Organizational Behavior Management Network (2008) and the American Psychological Foundation (2009). In 2010 he was honored with the Outstanding Applied Research Award from the American Psychological Association's Division of Applied Behavior Analysis. In 2011, the College of Wooster awarded Dr. Geller the Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane letters.

## B. F. Skinner & W. Edwards Deming



B. F. Skinner

“

**Immediate consequences outweigh delayed consequences.**

*—B. F. Skinner*

“

**Consequences for the individual usually outweigh consequences for others.**

*—B. F. Skinner*



W. Edwards Deming

“

**Don't blame people for problems created by the system.**

*—W. Edwards Deming*

“

**You can't measure everything. Sometimes you just do it because it's the right thing to do.**

*—W. Edwards Deming*

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**A numerical goal without a method is nonsense.**

*—W. Edwards Deming*

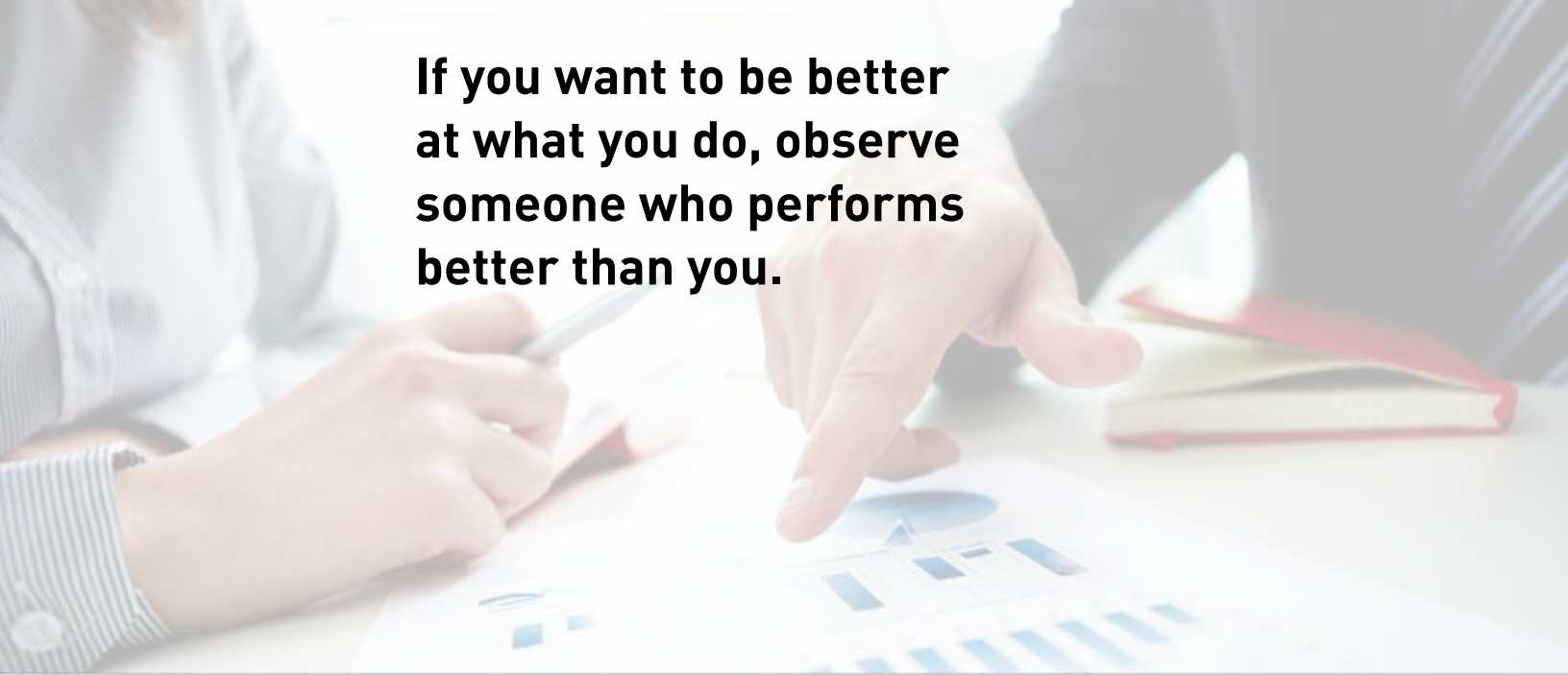
# 1

## Employ the Power of Positive Consequences

- a The most efficient way to improve both behavior and attitude simultaneously.
- b Positive consequences should be soon, frequent, and behavior-based.
- c Positive consequences promote success seeking.
- d Negative consequences promote failure avoiding.
- e Some consequences inspire self-motivation.

		DO YOU SEEK SUCCESS?	
		No	Yes
DO YOU AVOID FAILURE?	No	<b>Failure Acceptor</b>	<b>Success Seeker</b>
	Yes	<b>Failure Avoider</b>	<b>Overstriver</b>

## 2 Apply Observational Learning

A photograph showing a person's hand pointing at a document with a bar chart. Another person's hand is visible holding a pen. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with a book.

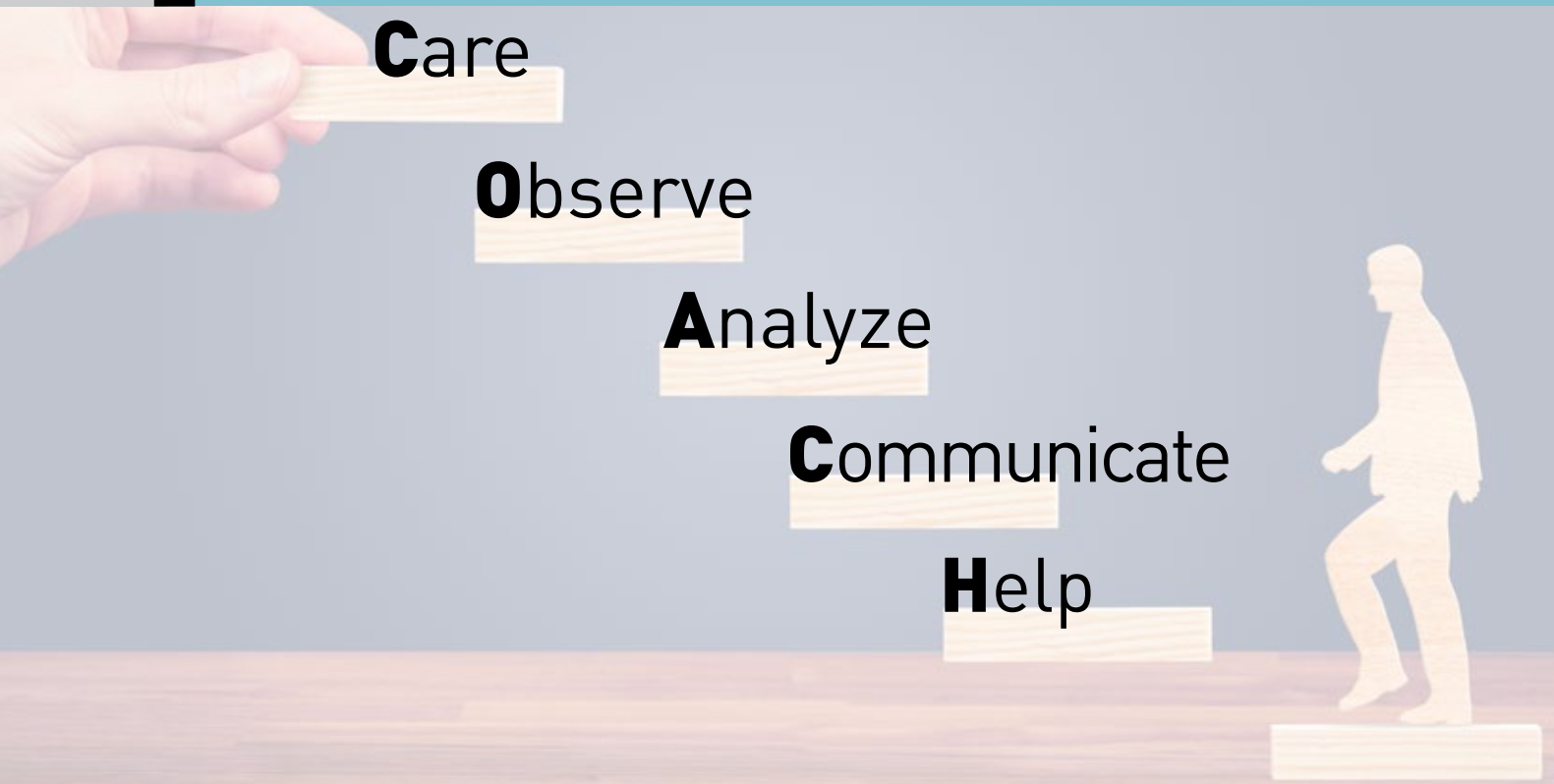
If you want to be better at what you do, observe someone who performs better than you.

## 3 Give and Receive Behavioral Feedforward Feedback

- a Make feedback sincere, specific, soon, and significant.
- b Specify the desirable behavior.
- c Give more supportive than corrective feedback.
- d Maintain humility to accept corrective feedback.
- e Become a behavior-based feedback coach.

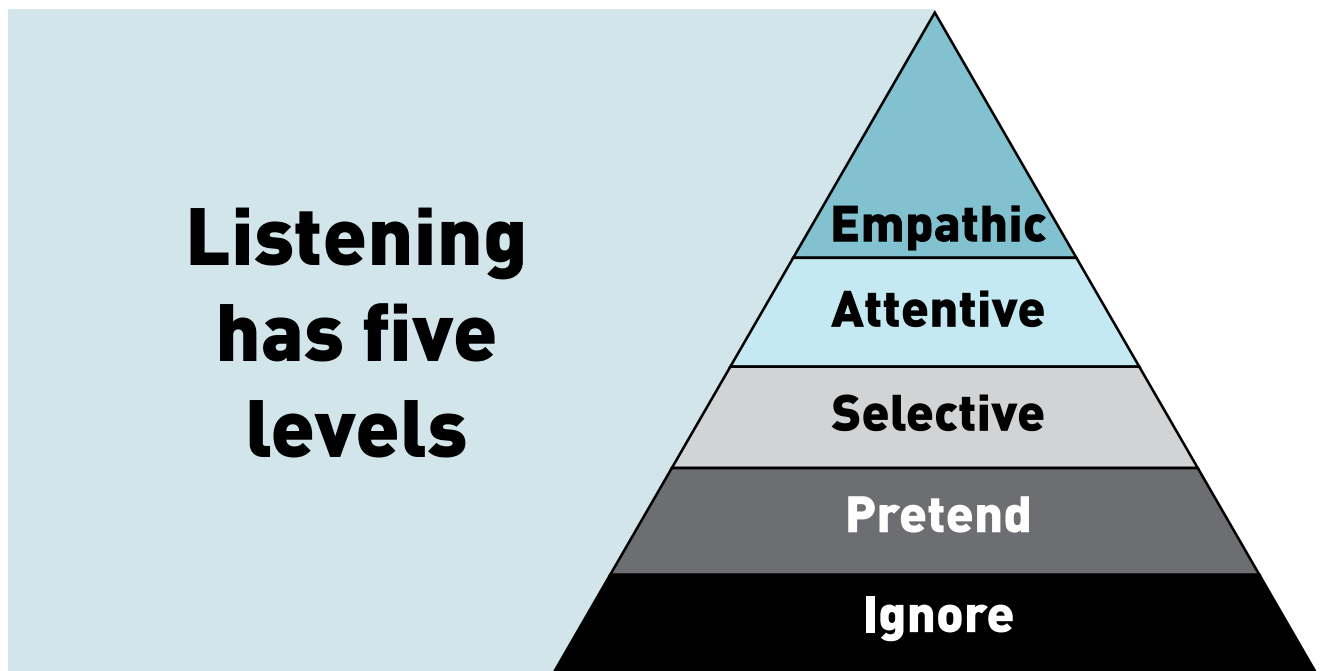
# 4

## Give More Supportive Than Corrective Feedback



# 5

## Embrace and Practice Empathy

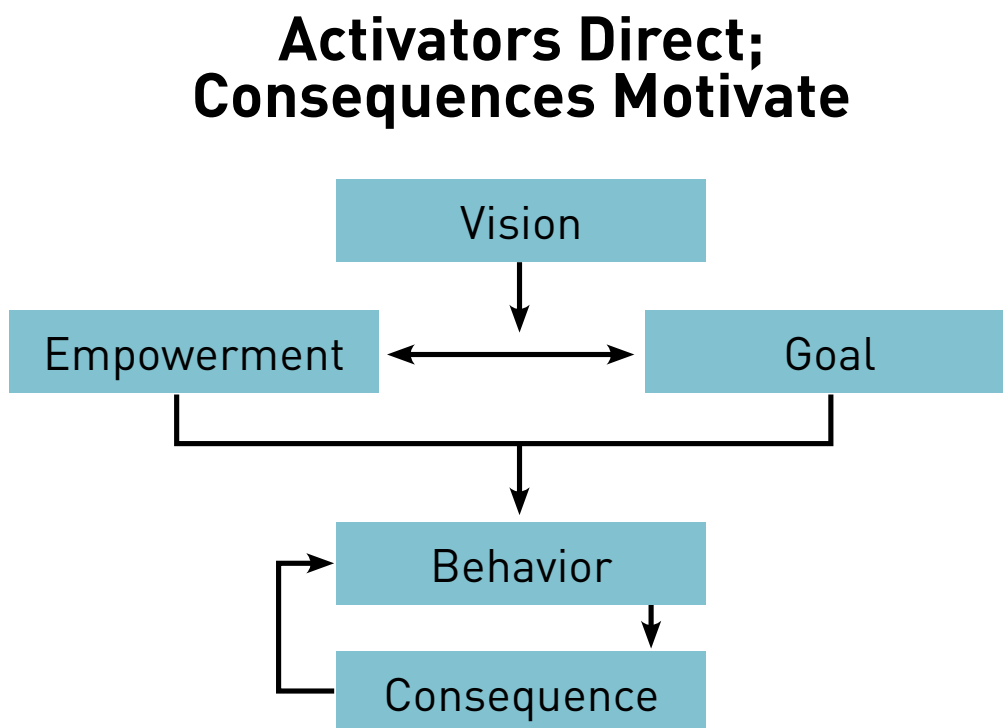


# 6

## Customize Consequences for Self-Motivation and Sustainability

- a Activate behavior with empowerment.
- b Empowerment activates goal commitment.
- c SMARTS goals are empowering.
- d Behavior is fueled by consequences.
- e Some consequences inspire self-direction.
- f Self-directed behavior reflects self-motivation.
- g Some consequences fuel self-motivation.

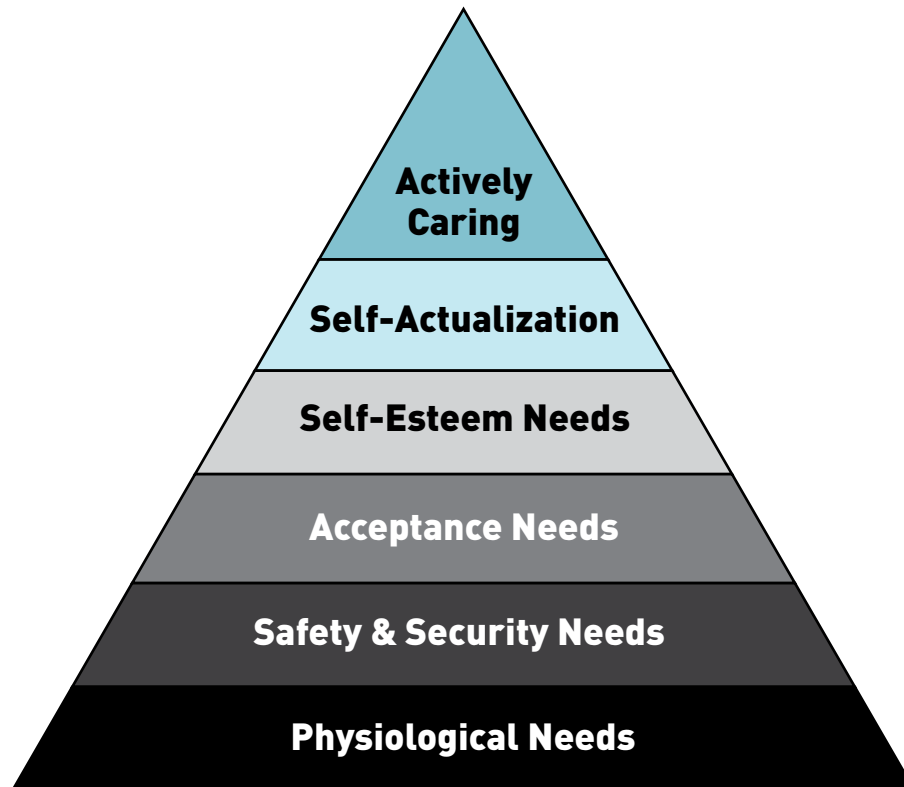
Google search “Scott Geller TEDx” for his 15-minute presentaion on Self-Motivation.



**S**pecific  
**M**otivational  
**A**chievable  
**R**elevant  
**T**rackable  
**S**hared

# 7

## Progress From Self-Actualization to Self-Transcendence





# Customize Consequences with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- a Needs suggest which consequences are motivating.
- b Higher needs reflect self-motivation.
- c The highest need is not about “self”.
- d AC4P behavior is fueled by a win-win interdependent mindset.



*“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”*

—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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## Sharing the AC4P Movement

Imagine a world full of compassion—nations without wars, communities without violence, organizations without interpersonal conflict, schools without bullying, and families without abuse. This is the vision of the Actively Caring for People (AC4P) Movement.

