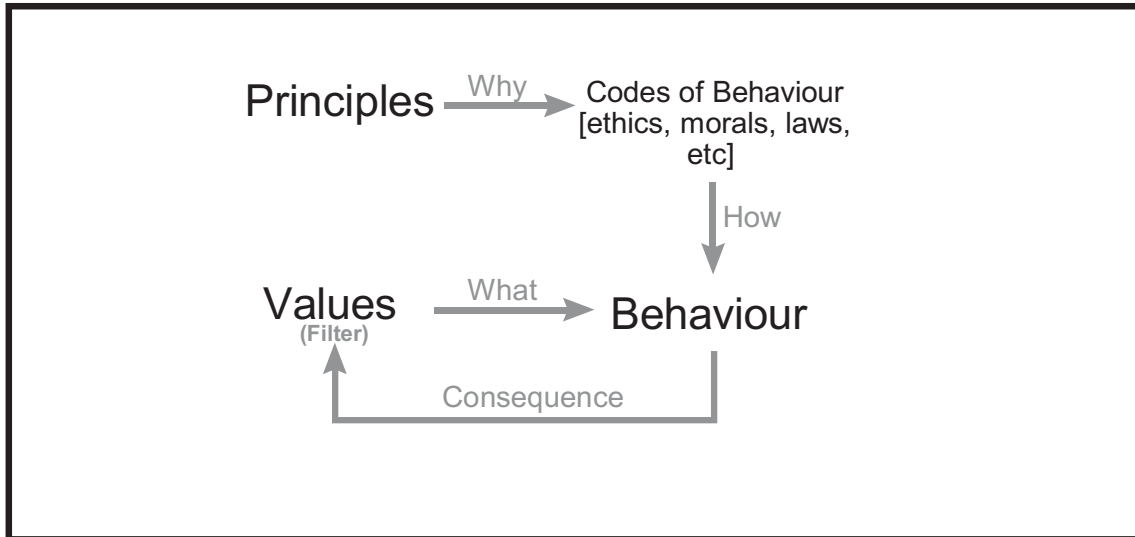


## Values, Ethics, and Principles

Values are life-style priorities. Since values lie behind all the choices we make, it follows they lie at the very core of the life we've created for ourselves through the choices we've made. Thus, through values we express what is important in our life and, when we are true to our values, the life-style we live is our expression of these values. By walking through the diagram in Figure 1.1, this chapter describes the links between, values, morals, ethics and principles.

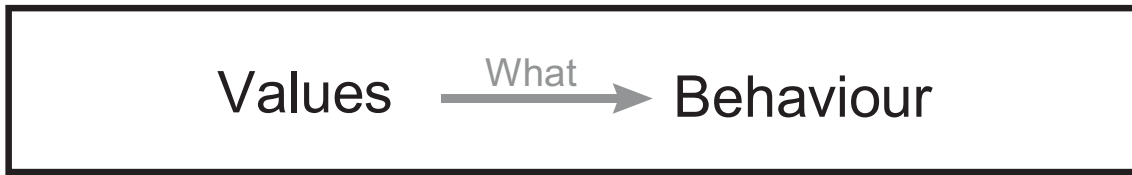


**FIGURE 1.1**

### **The Relationships Between Values, Behaviours, Ethics, Morals, Principles**

If you know what values a person holds, you will have a general idea of what they want to do in their life. For example, if a person's highest priority value is Achievement/Success you would expect them to be striving towards one or more goals and doing what ever they can to achieve them. Likewise, if a person's highest priority value is Research/Knowledge, you would expect them to be in an occupation such as medical research, social research, etc.

So there is a link between values and the general category of activities the person would be expected to be involved in because of the priority values they have. This is represented in the diagram of Figure 1.2



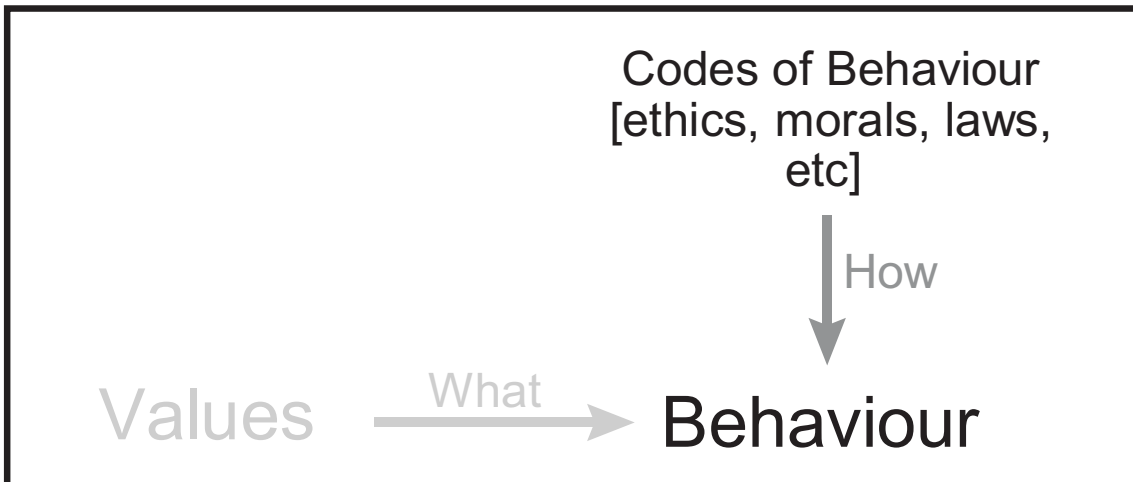
**FIGURE 1.2**

**Knowing a person's values gives you a general idea as to what activities are important to them**

From knowing the values alone, we cannot know how, specifically, the person is going to behave. Some people, driven by their high priority value Achievement/Success, will do anything it takes to achieve their goal – some athletes, for example, will take illegal drugs to boost their chances of success. On the other hand, we all know people driven by the same value, who do not cheat to win.

Let's now take the value, Research/Knowledge. If the person is a medical researcher, we cannot know from the value alone if they undertake their research by experimenting, or not experimenting, on animals.

Both examples on the previous page illustrate there's more to the picture than values. Because we live in a society, we cannot live our values any way we want. The impact of how we live our values on other people and the environment must be considered. This is where codes of behaviour (i.e. ethics, morals, norms of behaviour, laws, and the like) come in. As the diagram in Figure 1.3 depicts, codes of behaviour spell out how we are expected to live our values.



**FIGURE 1.3**

**Codes of behaviour tell us how or how not to live our values**

Thus, knowing a person's values gives us a general idea of what they want to do in their life, knowing their ethical or moral stance, informs us as to how they will live their values. The difference between values and ethics may be summarised as:

*Values motivate – ethics & morals constrain.*

Where do codes of behaviour come from? In a dictatorship, we are told how to live. In a democracy it's more complex:

- If a person is very religious, their religion should have a strong influence on what values they have and how they live them.
- For both the religious and non-religious, wisdom is strong source of influence on people's behaviour. When people we regard as wise advise us how to live, we hang on their every word.
- Science has a strong influence.

Taking science as a source of influence on how we behave. Latest brain research indicates that, when a person believes they are trusted, a chemical is released in their brain which actually makes them more trustworthy. Research has also shown that countries, where people are more trusting of each other, are wealthier than countries where the trust level is low – there's an obvious reason for this, in high trust countries financial transaction costs are low (a hand shake will do), whereas, in low trust countries, financial transaction costs are high (expensive legal contracts are necessary for every significant transaction). Knowledge of this type, about the nature of 'how things work', are called principles.

Let's now add the relationship principles? codes of behaviour, to the diagram in Figure 1.4.

Knowing the principles in which people believe, will give you a means to understand why they behave the way they do.

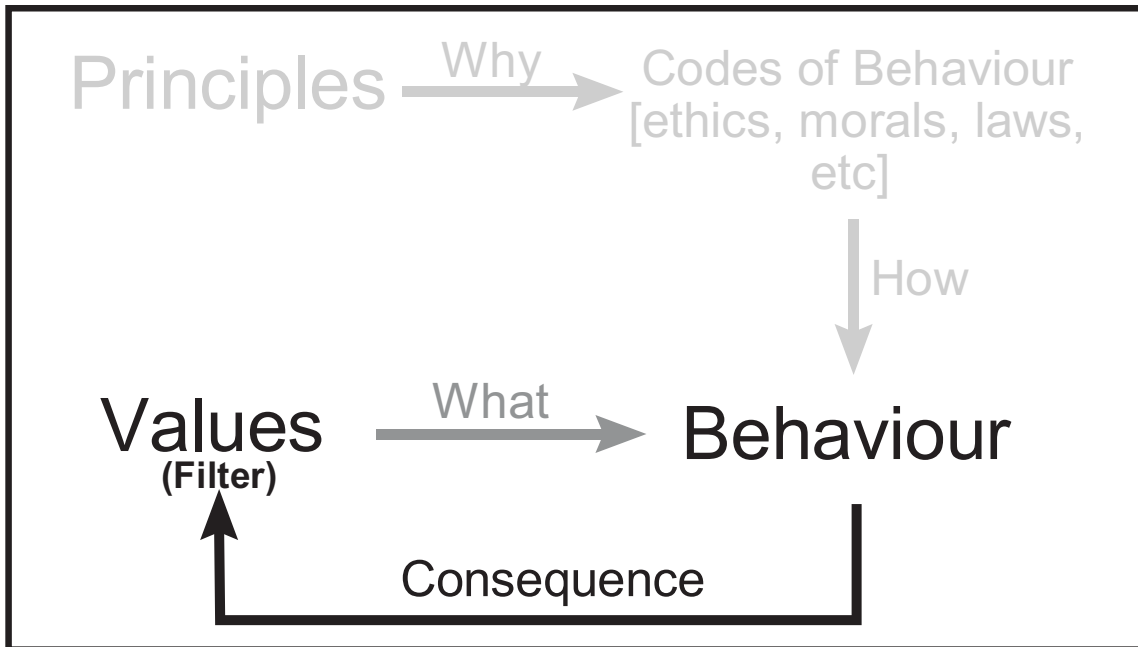
The next dimension on this model of values, ethics and principles has to do with people's values acting as a filter of what they "see". People do not see what is "actually out there" – the "truth may be out there" but people's values will stop them seeing it. For example, it's raining outside the house in Figure 1.5 – rain is what's actually out there.



**FIGURE 1.5**  
**We filter what we see through our values**

- The man, who has values such as work/labour and duty/obligation, experiences the rain as a “pain”. The rain is going to make his trip to work unpleasant. Despite this, he has to go?it’s his duty as a hard working man.
- The woman, who values art and beauty, looks out the window and sees her flowers thriving and blooming.
- The boy, who values fun, play and fantasy, sees himself playing a toy boat in the puddles.

Now we have another dimension to add to the model. This is depicted in Figure 1.6.



**FIGURE 1.6**  
**We filter what we “see” through our values**

When people engage in a behaviour motivated by their values, they don’t see the actual consequences of their actions, rather, the consequences of their actions are filtered through their values – they see what matches their values, and don’t see what does not match. This explains why people’s world-views and beliefs are so difficult to change. In De Bono’s words:

How many times do you have to hold your finger in a flame in order learn not to do it? Just once. How can the learning be so very quick? The finger in the flame may be the simplest example of a ‘belief’ system. A belief system is a way of perceiving the world that prevents us from testing the validity of the belief. Belief systems create perceptions that reinforce the belief system. They can be so powerful that people are prepared to give up life itself for their beliefs.

## World-Views & Values

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The model people have of the world (their world-view) is comprised of knowledge and beliefs. We hold the values we do, and believe in certain principles related to “the way things work in this world”, because of our model of the world. In turn, the principles in which we believe influence the way we believe people should behave.

Different people have different world-views. Yet, many people have similar world-views, which is just another way of saying that many people share similar beliefs about what living in this world is all about. Similar world-views have associated with them similar sets of priority values. People live their values in particular ways because of beliefs they hold about how those values should be lived. People filter the consequences of their actions through their values. Therefore, people’s world-views, once established, are very stable. Some people will die to defend their world-view rather than entertain the thought that someone else’s world-view might be more a more accurate representation of actuality than their own. Even if they are not prepared to die for their world-view, people who believe their world-view is the truth get rather upset when told, “Say not that you have found the truth, rather say I have found a truth.”

Because of the above dynamic, people’s world-views are very difficult to change. George Lakoff points out the futility of attempting to engage in such a pursuit simply through giving people the facts:

The truth will set us free. If we just tell people the facts, since people are basically rational beings, they’ll all reach the right conclusions.

But we know from cognitive science that people do not think like that. People think in frames... To be accepted, the truth must fit people’s frames. If the facts do not fit the frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off. Why?

Neuroscience tells us that each of the concepts we have – the long-term concepts that structure how we think – is instantiated in the synapses of our brains. Concepts are not something that can be changed just by someone telling us a fact. We may be presented with facts, but for us to make sense of them, they have to fit what is already in the synapses of the brain. Otherwise facts go in and then they go right back out. They are not heard, or they are not accepted as facts, or they mystify us. Why would anyone have said that? Then we label the fact as irrational, crazy, or stupid.

The model of values, ethics, principles, beliefs and perceptions, presented in this chapter is grounded in neuroscience and complexity theory. The objective of any personal or organisational change program is to change peoples’ values. Which means the program has to somehow change people’s world-views. To be successful, the program is going to have to wrestle with the very nature of the brain itself, which has a vested interest in preventing the beliefs, which structure it’s thinking, to be challenged. In this modern world, we hear daily of people who die for their beliefs—we call them terrorists or martyrs—which label we choose, for the same person, depends on our own world-view.

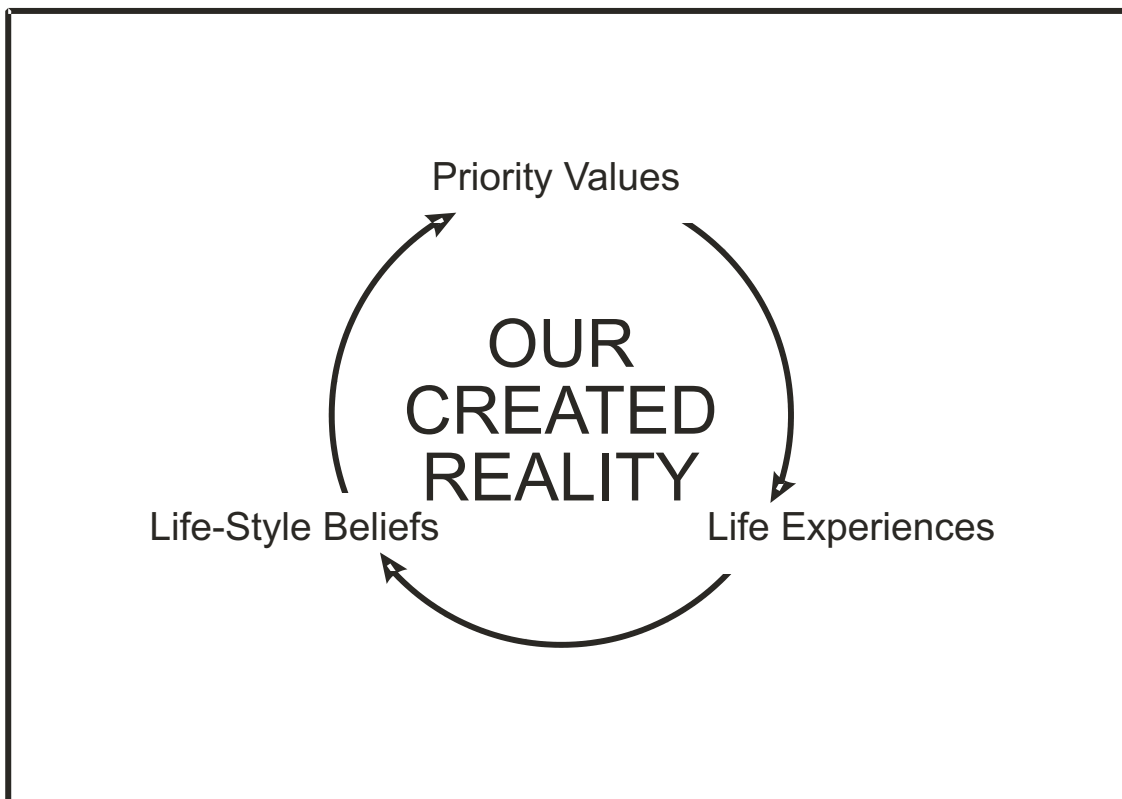
Which comes first, a person’s values or their world-view? The answer is neither . It can argued that because we hold certain beliefs we hold certain values as a priority. It can also argued that, because we hold certain values, the experience of living these values has resulted in us forming certain beliefs about what life’s all about. Both are equally plausible arguments.

Taking both statements as true leads to the conclusion that there is a systemic (Figure 1.7), rather than a hierarchical association between our priority values and our beliefs:

- we hold certain values as a priority because of our beliefs and
- we form certain beliefs about the world because of the experiences we have in attempting to live in accordance with our priority values.

Once we have established for ourselves a particular belief ? values ??experience cycle we become locked in to it and the reality we experience (which is the reality we have created) remains relatively constant over time. If we wish to experience a different reality we must create it for ourselves by altering any one of the three components:

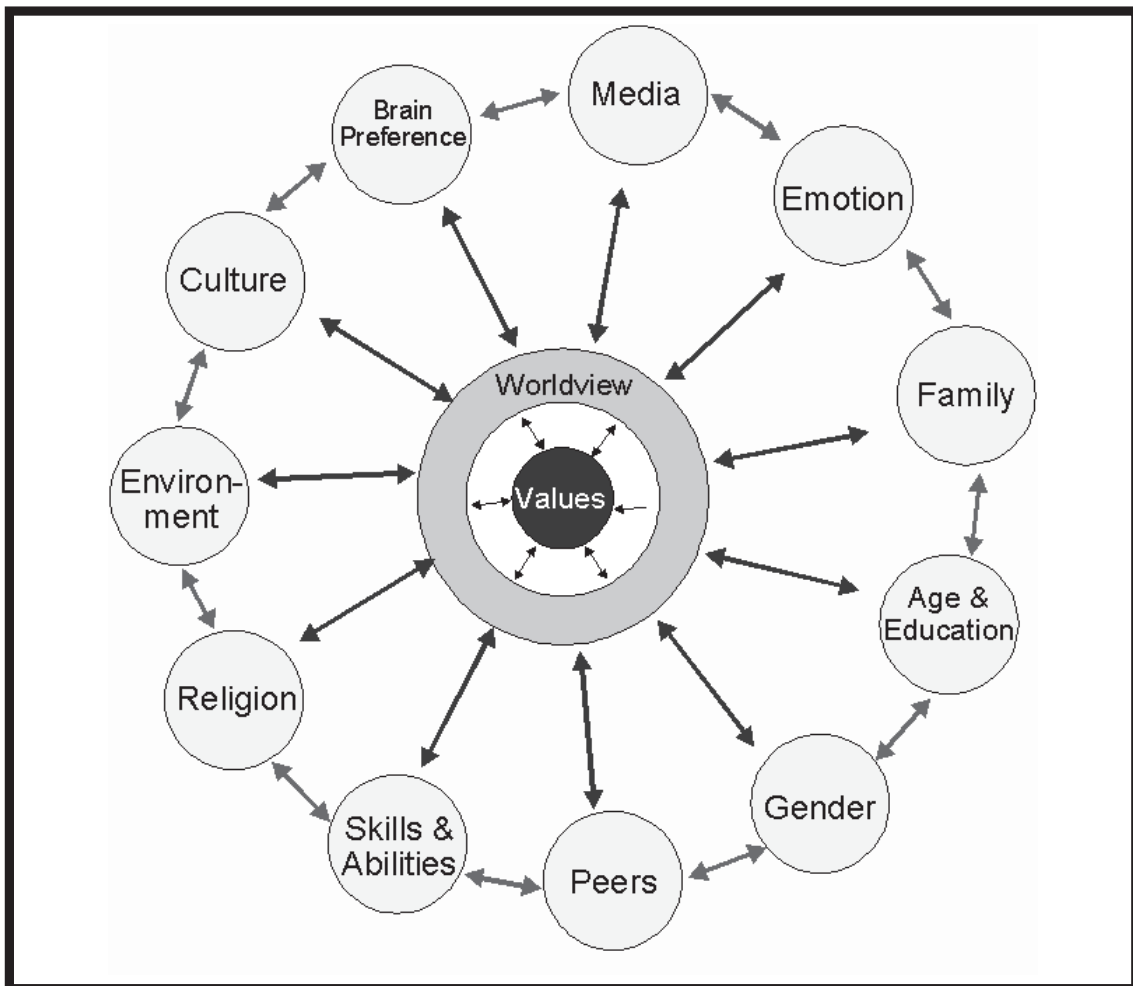
- values,
- experience, or
- beliefs.



**FIGURE 1.7**

**The systemic relationship between values, experience, beliefs, and world-view**

Changing a world-view is not as simple as just plugging something new in place of the old in a similar way that a child replaces a blue block in a wall they have made with a green block, or a round block with a square block. There are strong influences impacting on us (or forces acting within) that keep us locked into the same dialogue with the world around us. Figure 1.8 illustrates some of the influences on people's world-views.



**Figure 1.8**  
**Influences of our World-view and Values**

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