**Choice Theory**

Choice Theory argues that although we are surrounded by messages from society suggesting that we can control others and others can control us, this is actually untrue. Choice Theory argues instead that we are internally, not externally motivated. Outside events do not "make" us to do anything. Our behavior is driven by internal ideas of what is most important and satisfying to us. We have Five Basic Needs from which we make up our Quality World. We attempt to achieve our needs and wants and build our Quality World through our Total Behaviors. Problems in our lives arise when out Total Behavior is not effective in getting our needs and wants met. According to Glasser’s Choice theory, to affect positive changes in our lives we have two choices: 1.) change what we want or 2.) change our tactics.

**The Ten Axioms**

These are Glasser’s ten points that explain the basic principles of Choice theory and how to affect positive change in our lives.

1. The only person whose behavior I can control is my own.
2. All I can give another person is information.
3. All long-lasting psychological problems are relationship problems.
4. The problem relationship is always part of our present life.
5. What happened in the past has everything to do with what we are today, but we can only satisfy our basic needs right now and plan to continue satisfying them in the future.
6. We can only satisfy our needs by satisfying the pictures in our Quality World.
7. All we do is behave.
8. All behavior is Total Behavior and is made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling and physiology.
9. All Total Behavior is chosen, but we only have direct control over the acting and thinking components. We can only control our feeling and physiology indirectly through how we choose to act and think.
10. All Total Behavior is designated by verbs and named by the part that is the most recognizable.

**Five Basic Needs:**

We all have five basic needs: four of which are psychological.   
  
1.) survival,  
2.) love and belonging ,  
3.) power,  
4.) freedom,  
5.) fun.

The common ways in which we fulfill psychological needs are: loving, sharing, and cooperating with others: achieving, accomplishing, and being recognized and respected: making choices in our lives: laughing and playing. It is important to note that how important these needs are to the individual varies person to person. Some may value one need more than others.

**Quality World**

Our Quality World is everything we enjoy, love, want for ourselves and hope to achieve. For most people, the quality world is composed of pictures representing our wants: an image of an ideal mate, the faces of family we are close to, images of the perfect home etc. Unlike basic survival needs, which are the same for everyone, the pictures in each person's Quality World are very specific and completely individual. Some things in our Quality World may be more realistic and easier to obtain. Others may be more idealistic and may not be obtainable. We are constantly comparing the world as it is to our Quality World: the world as we’d like it to be. Significant differences between the world and our Quality World may result in frustration.

**Total Behavior**

We pursue our needs through our Total Behavior. Total Behavior consists of our: actions, thoughts, feelings, and physiology. We cannot directly control our physiology and emotions but we can influence them through our thoughts and actions. We use the most recognizable aspect of the Total Behavior being displayed to name that Total Behavior. For example: when a person is running, we would call that running. While feelings, thoughts, and physiological aspects are also present when a person is running, the most noticeable at the time is the action of running. We use our Total Behavior to meet our needs and build our Quality World. We use the best Total Behavior we can think of at the time to do so. However, we may need to learn or try new Total Behaviors that may be more efficient to meet our needs. Anxiety and depression are not described as nouns but rather verbs: depressing, anxietying. Instead of saying, “I am depressed,” under Choice Theory we would say “I am depressing” or “I am choosing to depress.”

**Four Questions**

Glasser suggests we use these Four Questions to guide us in making changes.

1. What do I want?
2. What am I doing to get what I want?
3. How are my current tactics working for me?
4. What else can I do?