



Writings of W. Burney Overton

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The Loop – An Addendum

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Somewhat to my surprise, THE LOOP, which is Paper #4 of the 1996-7 series of Burney's Papers, has elicited more response than any of the papers that I have written. As I have talked with people about their reactions, I realized that I had omitted from the paper yet another significant aspect that tends to keep THE LOOP in place.

Not only do I have difficulty breaking out of my LOOP because my identity and my sense of my world are tied to it, but, frequently, there is enough return or reward to me that I do not want to give up my LOOP—even if I tell myself that I need to do so and want to do so. I just don't deal with what I see as the cost to me if I break out of my LOOP.

So, I ask myself the question, "What do I get out of staying in my LOOP? Hence, what would it cost me if I were to break out of that particular LOOP?" Whether I want to acknowledge it or not, staying in my LOOP may have several significant returns or rewards. For instance, I have power in my LOOP. I affect and influence other people because of it. I am able to manipulate them to get what I want, or what I tell myself that I want. I use it as a way to get what I want, or what I tell myself that I want. I use it as a way to draw a lot of attention to myself that I both like and need. In other words, there are several rather powerful reasons for not changing from THE LOOP that I am in.

I illustrate.

I believe that I am a klutz. People tell me that I am a klutz. I behave as if I am klutz. It is difficult for me to admit, but if I really face myself, I realize that I use being a klutz to get other people to do things for me that I want done. For instance, my lawn mower needs repairing. The dresser in my bedroom needs painting. If I go camping, someone has to pitch the tent. I could help out at home by setting the table at mealtimes, or washing the dishes. The list goes on, and I can't do any of these things in a satisfactory way because I am a klutz. So I persuade people to do them for me. Or, I just get out of doing them.

Think what it would be like if I decided that I were not a klutz and went on and did all the things on my list and did them well. I'd have to work hard – harder than I have ever worked. I wouldn't begin to have the kind of influence on other people I have now. I certainly wouldn't get the attention I get being this way, and I might not get attention when I do things well.

I can't admit it out loud, but, with my LOOP in place, I've found a way to exercise power over other people, to manipulate them into doing what I want them to do, and to draw a lot of attention to myself. I've found a way to excuse myself from my responsibility for how I function and what I do. I have a system in place that serves me well, although I hesitate to acknowledge that it is happening. The more I think about it, the more I realize that I have several LOOPS in place that enable me to maintain my status quo, to excuse myself from responsibility, and to get what I want. That being the case, why should I think, even briefly, about breaking out of any of my LOOPS?

Of course, I don't want to break out of those kinds of LOOPS that serve me, as I tell myself, so effectively. So I am sick, or I have a poor self-image, or I believe that I am inept, or I am frightened by responsibility. With my LOOP, I have found a way to function that excuses me from all those things and causes other people to be attentive to me, even if they only feel sorry for me.

In order to get out of this LOOP, I must be prepared to really examine myself and my motives for doing and being. I must decide that the payout that I am already enjoying is not what I want, or will settle for. When I am willing to come to grips with myself in such a way, I then can decide to change and put the process in motion that brings the change about.

One other thought. Breaking out of my LOOP doesn't mean that I no longer have LOOPS in place. It does mean that I have replaced one LOOP with another that I find more desirable and more constructive. My LOOPS give form and structure to my life. Therefore – process again – I want to break the LOOPS that are not constructive and helpful and replace them with ones that are.