

PREFACE

Psychology: What It Is/How to Use It has three main goals: to introduce the student to the broad range of modern psychology; to do this in a readable style with much human interest; and to foster the student's self-understanding.

Some psychology books emphasize scientific principles, but leave to the student the task of finding these in everyday life. The student usually doesn't find them. But psychology, of all subjects, should be highly relevant to one's personal life. Some books accent the daily life and struggle of the student, but emphasize ideas not based in the firm foundation of science. The foundation usually crumbles, and again the student may not gain much self-understanding. Some books sacrifice readability and human interest in a seeming attempt to write encyclopedic introductions to the discipline, but this is not what many students need or want. *Psychology: What It Is/How to Use It* tries to teach science-based psychology in a way that makes it possible for the student to see the scientific principles operating in everyone's life.

There are several reasons for stressing the self-understanding approach. It makes the material more interesting and helpful for the students. It leads to experiential learning because the principles are tied to experiences and events in the student's life. It leads to self-examination. Throughout the book the question is asked, "How does this particular principle work in your life?" In order to gain understanding, students have to be interested and puzzled, and then make use of the facts or ideas they have. We are all interested in and puzzled by ourselves and by other people, so throughout the book the ideas of psychology are tied to these interests.

The organization of a book can make it easier for the reader to learn the material. This book is written in single-topic units, usually with three or four units to each chapter. Each principle is illustrated with a case history or example from daily life when it is introduced. Within each unit and also at its end are exercises in which the reader applies the material to his or her life.

The organization of each chapter is adapted from Robinson's famous SQ3R method for studying—survey, question, reach, recite, and review (see Chapter 4). Each chapter begins with an outline of the units in that chapter and a set of goals for the reader—that is, knowledge to be gained

or skills to be learned in the chapter. Each unit in a chapter begins with a set of questions that the student keeps in mind while reading. At the end of each unit is a summary, a list of key terms with definitions, and a set of test questions for self-quiz.

Psychology is about people and has vital relevance for people's lives. There is much research in the application of psychological concepts to the solution of human problems. I have tried to teach my readers how to use these practical concepts in their daily lives. For example, in studying memory, students learn how to improve their own memories. In studying sexism and sex roles, the students carry out a self-analysis in which they look for reinforcements and models of various sex-role behaviors in their own lives. In studying tension, they learn how to reduce tension. The basic principles of self-modification are here. In studying love and marriage, the students practice improving their interpersonal skills. *Psychology: What It Is/How to Use It* attempts an integration of the academic areas of psychology, with steps, plans, and self-analyses the students can carry out to understand themselves and change themselves. I try to go directly from an interesting presentation of science to self-examination.

By using simple sentences and a lot of human interest, I have tried to present the basic ideas of psychology in a way the readers can apply to themselves. All the information given is based on concepts and facts authenticated by empirical research.

My Thanks

Many people contributed to this book. Joyce Watson was invaluable. She worked as consulting editor, manuscript editor, idea person, and sounding board throughout the process of writing.

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David Watson
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