

# CHAPTER ONE

## UNDERSTANDING CYCLES

### What is a Cycle?

The word cycle is derived from the word circle. In fact a cycle is like a rotating circle. A cycle refers to a pattern that repeats over and over. The cycle's pattern may be ways of feeling, thinking, behaving, or a combination of all of them that repeat in your life. You might think of it like the loop that a bicycle chain forms on a bike. Each time you pedal the chain moves; as the chain moves, the bike goes forward. The bicycle chain goes around and around. It repeats the same pattern over and over. You drive the bicycle chain; the bike moves and you have to steer it or crash. If the bicycle chain were to break one link you could repair it; it would be a bit shorter but it would still work. But when you take several links out of the chain, it breaks down and will not operate.

Cycles of behavior are like a bicycle chain: they are made up of links that together form chains; the chains join to form the cycle, which repeats over and over, around and around. Ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting each make a link in the cycle. When put together they form a complex behavioral cycle that is acted out over and over. Like a bicycle chain, a deviant cycle can be broken, but only by breaking or removing many links.

#### Why Study the Cycle?

Why study cycles? Healthy or unhealthy cycles are the basis of your behavior and strongly affect your life. When you begin to learn about cycles,

you will better understand yourself and your behaviors. By understanding how your behavior is produced, you will be better able to intervene and change destructive behaviors. Making positive changes means you are on the road to leading a life that is happier, more satisfying, and healthier.

This workbook is about cycles of behavior in general and your own in particular. As you work through it you will discover some cycles that assist you to live a balanced healthy life. You will also discover cycles that are unhealthy and lead you toward deviant and destructive behavior. When you understand the relationship between the start of a

cycle and its end, you will have some of the knowledge and tools that help you avoid deviant behavior.

Your deviant cycle is a part of your overall "life cycle." Your life cycle is very complex. When it is healthy and productive, you are growing and not injuring yourself or others. At other times your life cycle may change to a "deviant," or less healthy cycle; your cycle "deviates" - it is different from normal. This deviation may be sexual or involve other areas of your life. It is possible to have deviant cycles of anger, gambling, or depression. When we use the term "deviant cycle" we mean a recurring

pattern of behavior that makes you less effective, less healthy, or prone to inappropriate or criminal behavior. At times your deviant cycle may become more intense and obvious, as when you begin to plan a sexual crime. At other times the deviant cycle is operating within you and you may not be aware of it. As you work through this book you will learn to recognize both kinds of cycles.

## **There are at least nine good reasons for you to study your cycles, especially your deviant cycle.**

### **1 You learn what led up to committing your crime.**

To stop your deviant behavior you must answer the question, "How did I get into the state of mind to commit my crime?" or "How could I have done it?" Many offenders think, "I'm not that kind of person, so why did I do it?" Understanding your deviant cycle will explain, in part, how you can go from acting wisely, feeling good, being productive and social, to acting criminally. The path from normal behavior to criminal behavior is not hard to see when you become aware of the decisions you made and the actions you took.

The path from health to deviance is not simple. Many small decisions, seemingly unrelated to the result, led up to the big decision of committing a deviant act or sex offense. When you study the cycle you will discover the long route you took to acting out your deviant or criminal behavior. When you understand the decisions that led to your deviant activity in the past, you will understand how you got into a deviant state of mind.

### **2 By studying your cycle you learn that each of your actions has several causes and several effects.**

Everything you do has a cause; something that happened before and directly influenced what came after. When you decide to masturbate, something happens before you make that deci-

sion. Perhaps you feel lonely, or see an attractive woman, or have a sexual fantasy, or just feel sexual. Something happened to set the stage for what comes next. At first it may be difficult to understand what caused you to behave in a certain way. As you learn about the deviant cycle you will discover that each thought, feeling, situation, behavior, or perception causes some effect or change in you or in your environment.

An effect does not have to be big; it may be small and subtle. For example, waking up and becoming aware of how your mouth feels may have the effect of making you want to brush your teeth. Perceiving how your mouth feels is then one of the causes that leads to brushing your teeth. When you understand your cycle you will learn about the causes (the behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and circumstances) that lead to your deviant behaviors.

### **3 You learn how you usually react to thoughts, feelings, and environments.**

When you understand your deviant cycle you can predict where particular types of thinking, feeling, and acting may lead. The ability to see the effects of your reactions in your behavior will help you control your deviancy and is a necessity for healthy living. For example, after you have learned about the cycle you will be able to predict both the long-term and short-term effects of drinking alcohol. You will be able to say how you will feel if you drink, how you might act, and how others respond to

you. Knowing about the effects of your behavior gives you an important tool for controlling your life.

#### **4 You learn that your behavior is affected by every place you go and everything you see.**

Different environments - friends, work, even movies - influence whether you think, feel, and act in healthy or in deviant ways. Some environments, like a topless bar, may influence you to act sexually. Other environments, like prison, may influence you to watch every move you make. As you get better at predicting how a particular environment may affect your feelings, thoughts, and actions, you will be able to find environments that encourage you to lead a healthy life and avoid environments that lead to deviancy.

Learning about the cycle will help you to understand the complexity of the relationship between your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and your environment. You may feel angry and be in an environment (like a classroom) that encourages you to stay in control; or you may feel angry and be in an environment (like a bar) that encourages you to "let it all out." As you better understand your cycle you will be able to identify environments where you will be at greater risk to reoffend. You will also learn about environments that may start your feelings and thoughts heading in a direction that can lead you to deviant behavior.

#### **5 By studying your cycle you learn how your feelings influence your behavior.**

Learning about your cycle will help you to discover how your feelings contribute to your behavior. Consider, for example, the feeling of "righteous anger": you feel that you have been wronged and have the right to be angry. Offenders often feel righteous anger; they use it as an excuse to violate a law or get even, and

they end up in more trouble than when they started. Learning to recognize unhealthy feelings and where they may lead is part of learning about the cycle.

#### **6 You learn how your thoughts influence your behavior.**

Your thoughts about yourself and the world contribute to your health or deviance. Errors in how you think about the world and yourself usually occur long before any problem behavior happens. If you never thought about deviant sexual behavior then you would not act deviantly. Even in what appears to be an impulsive, spontaneous crime, thoughts set the stage for the behavior. Learning what kind of thinking leads to deviant behavior and what kind leads to healthy behavior is an essential step in understanding your cycle.

#### **7 You learn how your beliefs about the world and yourself influence how you act.**

Most adults have old beliefs or fixed ideas that they grew up with. Some are accurate and healthy, and some are destructive. An example of an unhealthy fixed belief might be "all women are untrustworthy," simply because they are women. You might have learned it in your childhood if you were sexually abused by a woman or if the men in your family taught you to believe it. This distortion of reality ("all women can't be trusted") influences you to act suspicious or hostile toward women; your hostile behavior then influences others to avoid you or be angry with you. Unhealthy fixed beliefs lead you into trouble. Understanding what your fixed beliefs are and how they have contributed to your deviant cycle enables you to change in a healthy way. For example, once you realize that one of your beliefs is "all women can't be trusted," you can change that belief. You can learn that some women (like some men) can't be trusted. You can also learn

how to decide which ones you can trust and which ones you cannot.

## **8** Understanding your cycle teaches you how what you do today influences what you do tomorrow and in the future.

Understanding your cycle teaches you where you are going. If you have a habit of being angry today, you will probably be angry tomorrow unless you make a conscious effort to change. If you have a habit of resentment this year, you will likely be resentful next year also. If you have a habit of laziness today, you will be lazy tomorrow. When you look deeply into your cycles you see that how you acted in the past influenced your later behavior. In an unconscious and unhealthy way you have been in control of your life for most of your life. What you decided to do one day led you to the next day's decisions. You can change this so that you have a healthy power over your future. It all depends on what you do today, each day.

### **Links in a Chain**

A link is a small distinct part of a chain that connects one part with another. Links are the single thoughts, feelings, or actions that make up your cycle. If the links were not present to connect one behavior with another, you would not continue with an action. Think about your morning routine. You might get up, think about having a cup of coffee, and go make coffee. The link between getting up and drinking coffee is the thought of coffee. If you come

home from work and feel lonely, you might call your lady friend. The feeling of loneliness is the link between coming home and calling your lady friend.

Each of these links is connected to another link. You feel bored, think about going driving, get into your car, feel pleasure, think about going to the movies, and drive away in that direction. Each thought, feeling, and behavior in this sequence links what came before with what comes after.

They are connected like the links in a chain. One link is connected to the next link, is connected to the next link, is connected to.... When you break any link in the chain, the chain is broken. You break your deviant cycle by breaking one link at a time.

When you look closely at any sequence of behavior you notice that there are many small links. These links are essential to the behavior; the chain of behavior would not continue without them. The

## **9** Understanding your cycle will teach you when and how to stop your deviant behavior.

Understanding your cycle is a step toward developing tools to break an out-of-control cycle. When you have learned what environments, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors lead to unhealthy or dangerous situations, you can intervene to stop them. Even when there hasn't been any direct problem with a feeling or thought, you may need to intervene so it does not lead to deviant behavior. Learning about your deviant cycle teaches you where you are heading and when you must intervene. For example, loneliness by itself is not unhealthy, but in your deviant cycle it is an early warning sign that you need to intervene and make decisions about how to handle that feeling. You may decide to go to an AA meeting or call up a friend instead of running your old pattern of trying to drink your loneliness away. Knowing when to intervene is one result of understanding your deviant cycle.

link may seem very unimportant, but the entire chain of behaviors would stop if that link were not there. If you did not think, "I'd better get the paper," you would not read the paper. Thinking is an essential link. Part of your morning routine would stop if you broke that link. If you did not feel you needed to brush your teeth, you would be less likely to brush them. If you broke several links in your morning routine, the entire morning routine would come to a stop.

### **The First Link: Perception**

A perception is what you see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. In order to recognize something you must become aware of it, you must perceive it. Perceptions are the result of information your senses receive and your brain processes. If you smell something burning, that is a perception. Seeing a car coming at you is a perception. Your awareness of your environment is the result of perceptions. Perceptions by themselves are not good or bad. How you respond to a perception is what is important.

A trigger is something that starts a bullet moving. In the same sense a perception may trigger healthy or unhealthy thoughts or feelings. For example, seeing a picture of a naked child is a perception.

When you respond to the picture sexually, that feeling is an unhealthy response to the perception. Because you have responded sexually to the photo, that photo is a trigger for your deviant sexual feelings. Seeing a woman hitchhiking is a perception. If you are a rapist, seeing the woman may be a trigger for thoughts of picking her up and raping her. Perceptions often trigger or start a series of thoughts or feelings.

### **The Second Link: Thought**

Thought refers to all mental activity: ideas, notions, opinions, beliefs, impressions, judgments, etc. Generally, you think about what you are doing, different situations you encounter, past events, future happenings, or other ideas. The human thought process provides you with the capacity to reason, use logic, use common sense, put together ideas, and a variety of other processes.

Your mind is seldom empty of thoughts. Even when you are sleeping your mind is active. You have dreams even when you do not remember dreaming. In your daily life your mind is active in an ongoing mental dialogue so habitual, so usual, that you hardly notice it. To see how active your mind is, try sitting in a quiet place and counting your breaths. See if you can focus

on the counting without thinking of anything else. You'll be amazed at how much is going on in your mind without your ever being aware of it.

Thoughts govern just about everything you do. You do not have to be aware of the thoughts for them to influence you. Whether you are aware of them or not, even the simplest, most natural, ordinary action requires thought. The thoughts, "I think I'll make some coffee," or "I think I'll take a shower" come before doing these things. If you never thought about coffee you would never make coffee. Thought is necessary for action. You may not be aware of simple thoughts occurring throughout the day before you do something because routine thoughts are often abbreviated, shortened into personal mental shorthand. "I think I'll make some coffee," might be shortened to "coffee." "I hate him for what he did," might be shortened to "hate."

Thoughts are always present. Usually a perception precedes a thought, which is followed by action. For example, you look through a magazine and see a picture of a woman. First you see the picture of the woman and then you begin thinking about how sexy she looks. Thinking about sex encourages you to decide to masturbate and you reach for

your fly. Your perception led to your thoughts, which led to your decision to masturbate and to your action of reaching for your fly. Thoughts make links that connect perceptions and actions.

When you allow your thoughts to dwell on the idea of doing something, those thoughts prepare you to do it. Sex offenders have thoughts and fantasies about committing their crimes before they actually do them. As a sex offender, your thoughts about deviant sex link your perceptions and your behavior.

Deviant thoughts are often based on prejudices, old habitual ways of thinking. These prejudices may be subconscious, the result of the distorted ways you learned to feel safe and powerful as a child. Often people are prejudiced without even knowing it. They have a habit of seeing a person of another race, a different background or sexual orientation, the other gender, or someone with a handicap and thinking, "I don't like that..." Because of these old thoughts, their minds are not clear enough to be open to new experiences. Learning to be aware of these deeply rooted and half-hidden thoughts is one step toward breaking the cycle of deviant thinking.

## **The Third Link: Feeling**

A feeling is an emotion or an internal sensation. You have many feelings. Feelings often happen after perceptions or thoughts. Feelings are your internal reactions to things that are going on around you and within you. When you see a person (a perception) who has been hit by a car, you may feel panic. Later as you remember the incident (a thought), you may feel sad. There is always a connection between what you think and what you feel; either one may happen first, but the other closely follows it. When you feel sad, you may think your life is horrible. On the other hand, when you think your life is horrible you may feel sad. Your feelings affect your thoughts; your thoughts affect your feelings. Being aware of what you are feeling is an important step in changing your life. Once you know you feel depressed much of the time, you can make decisions that will take you out of depression. When you do not know how you feel, you cannot make healthy decisions.

It is important to understand the emotions that are a part of your cycle. You may feel any or all of the following emotions as part of your deviant cycle: sadness, joy, fear, anger, fatigue, depression, happiness, love, hate, confusion, emptiness, frustration, con-

tentedness, pain, hurt, and loneliness. These feelings often make the connection between your thoughts and your behavior.

As a sex offender you probably block your feelings. You deny that you feel emotions like sorrow, fear, or pain. It becomes a habit for you to cut off feelings that might help you understand how others feel; this habit makes it easier for you to commit a crime. When your capacity for feeling compassion is lessened, you become less human and you respond to others as if they are less than human. When you cut off old, painful emotions like fear, terror, helplessness, and confusion, you cut off all emotions; you may not feel fear, but you probably don't feel joy either. As you write out your deviant cycle, try to notice when certain feelings start and stop.

## **The Fourth Link: Behavior**

Behavior means action, what you do. How you behave is the result of how you think and feel. If you feel like masturbating and you think it is okay, then you will probably masturbate. On the other hand, people who never have positive thoughts or feelings about deviant sexual acts do not commit sexual crimes.

Initially, most of your behavior is a result of your con-

scious thoughts. When you have frequently repeated these behaviors, they become habits and take very little thought. Sometimes behaviors become ritualized and compulsive; you feel you have no control over them. As you learn more about your cycle you will learn that you can stop compulsive behavior by changing the thoughts and feelings that precede it.

Behavior is not only what you do at this moment, but also the outcome of what you have done in the past. For example, suppose that in the afternoon you make a choice to go to the park. An hour later you decide to stop and watch some children play. Soon you see a boy going into the restroom and

step closer to the molesting behavior.

### The Chain Gang

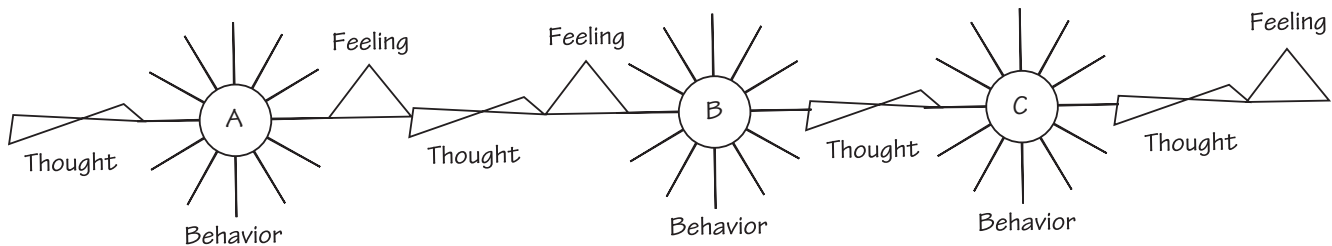
A behavioral chain is a series of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that are connected and follow one after another. Like an iron chain, it is made up of small-connected links. When you pull one end of an iron chain, eventually the other end moves. In the same way, when you affect the beginning of a chain of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the end of the chain is also affected.

Consider the chain of behaviors involved in smoking cigarettes. First you feel bored or tense. Then you think, "Do I

rettes, then you disrupt the rest of the chain. But breaking one link will not stop your smoking. When you break another link by saying to yourself, "I won't borrow any cigarettes," then you have disrupted the chain even more. When you break a third link by leaving any area where someone is smoking, you break the chain even more. Break enough links and you stop smoking.

In a behavioral chain the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors automatically lead from one to the other. When drop-kicking a football, first you hold the ball (touch, a perception) and roll it in your hands so the laces are up (an action/behavior). You look down the

Figure #1



you decide to follow him in. If you never went to the park and weren't around children, you wouldn't have the behavior of molesting a child. Your earlier decisions made it easier for you to follow the boy into the restroom. When you chose to be with children, that behavior brought you one

have any cigarettes?" Next you might check your pockets and get the pack and matches out. Lastly, you open the cigarettes, remove one, put it into your mouth, light the match, hold it to the end of the cigarette, and inhale. If you affect the beginning of the chain by not buying ciga-

field (sight, a perception), notice the left-side receiver isn't paying attention (a perception leading to a thought), feel strong, alert, and a little sly (all feelings), decide (thought) to kick it to him, raise the ball out in front of you (an action/behavior), and take two or three steps (another action/

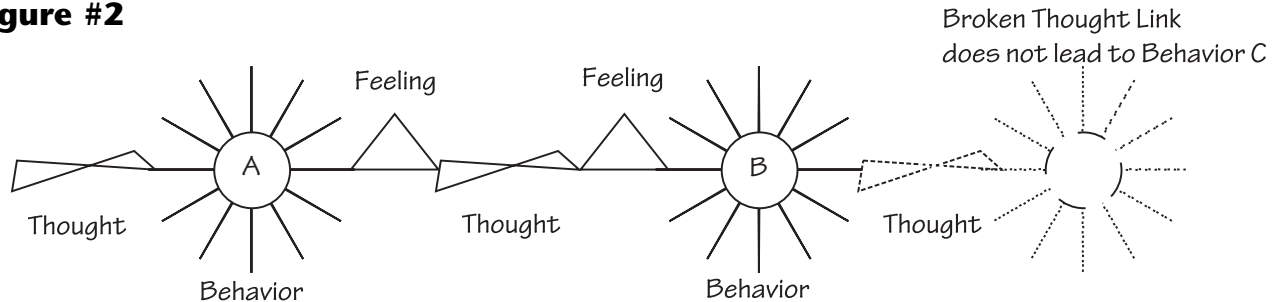
behavior). Finally, you decide (a thought) when and at what angle to drop the ball as you swing your foot forward to kick it (an action/behavior). The first time you go through this chain of behaviors, it takes a lot of thought. At first

A behavioral chain has a beginning and an end. You start your morning routine by waking up and automatically go through your morning until you end up going to work (the end of the chain). Once a chain of behavior

finally going to sleep again, only to wake and start over. The links or chains you add on to this basic cycle make it complex and intricate.

You can have many different cycles each made up of sev-

**Figure #2**



you don't know what to do or how to do it. But after you have kicked enough footballs it takes only brief thoughts. Eventually the behavior becomes so automatic that once you start at the beginning, you move from one behavior to another without hesitation and with barely conscious thoughts. The more you have practiced a behavioral chain the more automatic it becomes. After a while if the chain starts it will go to the end with little awareness on your part. Everyone has many automatic chained behaviors. Think about the number of cigarettes that you have smoked or the miles you have driven without being aware of them.

ends, it does not automatically repeat itself like a cycle does. Some examples of chained behaviors are washing your car, feeding your animals, cleaning your house, washing the dishes, etc. With these chains you don't automatically repeat the behavior over and over. You don't feed your dog just after you feed your dog. A chain may be a part of a larger cycle that does repeat.

### **Cycles Spinning on Cycles Spinning...**

A cycle is a series of events that happens over and over. The cycle may be short or long, subtle or obvious. Your biological patterns are cycles of sleeping then waking, being hungry then eating, and

eral chains and links. The effects of your different cycles may be productive, as when you go to work or take care of your family. Or the effect may be destructive and end in behaviors like rape, child molesting, or addiction to drugs and alcohol. The work you do while going through this workbook will help you understand your cycles of behavior and enable you effectively to change deviant cycles into positive, healthy cycles.

Cycles make up your life and all that you do. You have learned about the parts of the cycle: perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions linked together in chains. What you perceive in your environment triggers thoughts, feelings,



and behavior. These links connect to make the chains of your cycle. Each link is significant: even the smallest one can influence how you act, feel, and think.

Cycles are complex and you will learn more about them

in the chapters that follow. Your deviant cycle also has phases, each containing its own small cycles, chains, and links. We have named these phases Build-up, Acting-out, Justification, and Pretending (your life is) normal. The next four chapters deal with the

links, chains, and cycles within the Build-up and Acting-out phases of your deviant cycle. When you work through all of the exercises in this book you will have a good understanding of how your deviant cycle works.

# Chapter One Assignments

♦ Do Not Write In This Workbook ♦

**1** a. List ten (10) reasons why it is important to learn about your deviant cycle. Nine are listed in this chapter; see if you can come up with a tenth. For each reason write what it means to you and explain how it can help you with your sexual deviancy problems.

**1** b. Give one (1) example from your life that shows how you could have acted differently if you had known about each reason listed above.

**Hint:** For example, suppose for Assignment #1a you put “understanding how feelings lead to deviant behavior” on your list of reasons. Then for Assignment #1b describe a time when that understanding would have helped you act differently. You might write, “If I had realized how feeling lonely led to my going into bars, I could have met a friend for coffee instead.”

**2** a. Write down the first THOUGHTS that come to your mind when you read each of the following words:

Police Prison Wife Sex Children  
Rain Beach Lunch Women New York

**2** b. Write down the first FEELINGS that you have when you read the same list.

**Hint:** The purpose of this exercise is to help you see how one link (also known as a stimulus) immediately leads to another. This is how links are formed and a cycle begins.

**3** Write down one (1) example from your life and one (1) example from someone else’s life (two [2] examples for each word) for cycle, chain, and the different types of links: feeling, perception, thought, and action/behavior.

**4** Think about what you read in the text. What is one way habits might form? Write down an example from your life of a habit that got formed this way. Be sure to write down the specific links that led to the habit.

**5** Using words or a diagram, write down the details of three (3) different chains of behavior in your life. Be able to describe this process to your group or a friend if you are working alone.

**Review these assignments with your therapist and with your group. If you are working on your own, share them with a friend or person you trust.**

# CHAPTER TWO

## PERCEPTIONS: THE TRIGGERS IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT

**P**erception is the basis for much of what you do. It is the foundation of what you learn and what information you take in; it plays a significant role in shaping your behavior. Perceptions trigger your thoughts and feelings.

Of the five senses, vision and hearing are probably the two you rely on most for information about the world. Information you hear and see usually results in thoughts and emotions that lead to behavior. For example, when you see a couple walking together, you may think, “I don’t have anybody special,” and feel lonely. This thought and feeling might lead to an action: calling up a friend. Or you hear splashing and yelling from the river. You think about whether someone might have fallen in, feel excited, and take action by going to help. As you learn about the links that form behavioral chains, you will find that many of them begin with hearing or seeing something.

### **Perceptions, Attitudes, and Behavior**

What you perceive through your senses affects your attitudes or beliefs about the world around you. If you grew up or now live in a violent environment, your attitudes about violence have

been shaped by those perceptions. Perceptions affect attitudes, which affect behavior. Your attitudes and your behavior are like two sides of a coin. They are inseparable, and though they may look different, they are really the same. If your attitude about people who get loud and rowdy when they are drunk is

that they are obnoxious, you probably do not spend much time around them. You may have developed these attitudes and behaviors in your childhood or they may have come from the people you are with and the places where you now spend time. Dennis got his bad attitude from his father.

### **Dennis**

Dennis’s father didn’t like him very much. It seemed that no matter how hard Dennis tried to do things “right” (his father’s way), nothing he did was ever good enough, or so his father told him over and over.

When Dennis washed the car like he was told to, his father pointed out streaks on the finish or spots he missed. If there weren’t any, his father made up some other reason the car wasn’t washed right. When Dennis mowed the lawn, his father complained about the uneven lines or yelled at him for not cleaning the lawn mower correctly.