

Chapter 1 : Psychology : Neil R. Carlson :

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Everything we do is influenced, in part, by our need to solve specific problems in our environment. For example, before you can react, your brain needs to communicate with the environment and with the rest of your body. To communicate internally, your body uses the nervous system, the endocrine system, and to some extent, even the genetic code. We also need to translate the messages from the environment, which come in a variety of forms, into the internal language of the nervous system which is electrochemical. We solve this problem through our various sensory systems, such as vision and audition. Our survival also depends on our ability to communicate through language and other, nonverbal forms of communication. I invite you to browse through the rest of the preface for a preview of how this book is organized. And I hope you will soon begin applying what you learn to situations in your daily life. The study of psychology may be challenging, but above all else it is relevant to everything we do. Even after exposure to its breadth, the topics of psychology can remain mysterious and forbidding. In Psychology, Fifth Edition, I focus extensively on the function and purpose of psychological processes. For example, if you want to understand how we learn about the signaling properties of events problem, we can look to classical conditioning solution. Notice the shift in emphasis: The student has a reason to follow the discussion. Because the discussion is about an adaptive or conceptual problem, it naturally promotes critical thinking. The student sees the connection between the problem and the solution. The adaptive problem-solving theme extends across chapters. The organization provides an effective learning framework. Each chapter is organized around a set of topics that a focus the discussion on the functional relevance of the material and b demonstrate that we think and act for adaptive reasons. When we view behavior as the product of adaptive systems, psychology begins to make more sense. Students learn that behaviors including the methods of psychologists! When we emphasize adaptiveness, we relax our egocentric view of the world and increase our sensitivity to why behavior is so diverse, both within and across species. Our appreciation of individuality and diversity is enhanced by understanding that differences are natural consequences of adaptations to the environment.

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