General Semantics Help Sheet
Andrea Johnson

Principles and Extensional Devices

The principle of non-identification — no two things or two points in time are exactly the same

Korzybski provided the extensional devices as tools to help us implement this principle:

- **indexing** — student₁ is not student₂; apple₁ is not apple₂

- **dating** — Andrea₁₉₉₄ is not the same as Andrea₂₀₀₄.
  Andrea’s understanding of GS₆une 1₄ is not the same as Andrea’s understanding of GS₁₉₉₄ 1₄.
  The apple in my refrigerator yesterday is not the same as that apple today.

The principle of non-allness — we cannot know or understand everything about an event, a person, an experience, an apple, etc.

Korzybski gave us the device of *et cetera (etc.)* as a tool to remember this.

> Even though I understand a lot about general semantics, I know that I cannot know everything. I include the etc. to remind me of what is left out.

When you observe these principles and use the extensional devices when thinking, evaluating, questioning, processing, deciding, behaving, etc., then you are more extensional.

**Identification** — when you “identify” you behave, think, believe, decide that two things that look alike ARE the same or IDENTICAL.

“Students are students, I just treat them all the same.”

“Pick any apple, there’s no difference.”

“Japanese people love rice.”

**Allness** — when you operate from “allness,” you believe that you have ALL the facts you need, you know everything about a topic, you don’t need any more information.

“I took 10 swimming lessons, that’s all I need to now about swimming.”

“I watched the Olympics and I now know what to look for in a champion skater.”

When you observe, react, respond, think, behave as if you have all the information, know all about something, don’t perceive differences among things that look alike or seem alike, then you are more intensional.