Software allows users to sort out their moods

A former psychotherapist has devised a question-and-answer program that allows people to analyse their own moods and attitudes.

After Russell Kennard had been practising psychotherapy at Newcastle in NSW for about 10 years, he had a client who changed moods very quickly.

It was an experience which was to change his career.

He came to the realisation that peoples' personalities are the sum of their many different moods and attitudes, or 'personas' and he set about the task of developing a software program which would enable everyone to identify their own sub-personalities.

His client – a woman in her 30s - was normal except for high levels of anxiety that led her to experience swift mood changes.

"She could go from coping adult to crying infant in a matter of two seconds," Mr Kennard said.

"I asked myself how that could happen, because she didn't have schizophrenia or a multiple personality disorder – she was basically just a normal person who had chronic anxiety.

"I asked her a lot of questions to identify her different moods and we came up with about 16 different personas written out on paper sitting on the floor.

"When you have described a lot of personas like that you can design a 'persona tree', which is like a family tree for personas.

"It shows people how their personas are connected to each other, and lets

Russell Kennard: "Everyone's personality is made up of a community of sub-personalities which can be discovered and described."

them see how they move from one persona to another along a kind of pathway. Using the persona tree you can see how someone gets to an acutely depressed or destructive persona, and if you understand that pathway then intervention is relatively easy: you ask them to go back to the healthiest persona they have.

"In this case, the client had a strong coping persona in her personality; one that could look after her. I suggested that she focus on that persona the next time she was feeling overwhelmed and indecisive. She did, and it changed her.

A 'tree' shows people how their personas are connected to each other.

"I realised I had stumbled onto something very useful: if you can see how some parts of your personality relate to other parts, then you're in a powerful position to change yourself in the direction you want to change."

After the equivalent of five years' full-time work on this project Mr Kennard is close to completing *Mypersonalities,* which is software that could be technically described as an expert program that uses fuzzy logic.

In mid-April, he plans to make

the program available on the Net (*www.mypersonczlities.com),* retailing for a nominal cost of less than $30.

"The program puts all the power in the hands of the user," Mr Kennard said.

"Traditional psychological tests use a lot of jargon which has to be deciphered by a psychologist, and are really aimed at putting people into psychological categories.

"*Mypersonalities* doesn't do that, it simply says to people OK let's find out what your personality is like in your own language.

"Once people have discovered the personas that make up their personality they give them names.

"The name given to a persona is designed to reflect the behaviour and attitude of that persona.

"One of my own personas, for example, I call 'Will'. Will is an easy-going persona that is always willing to help.

"The program can then show people, through another series of questions, how to steer their moods and behaviour in a direction they want. The essential difference between traditional psychological programs and this one is that this program allows individuals to recognise the various parts of their personality and make decisions about themselves.

"This empowers them to act on what they need rather than having a psychologist come along and say oh well, you fit into this category or that category."

"I'm hoping to get a lot of feedback because I think there will be so many applications for instance, it could be used for matchmaking or in job or career selection or for identifying your strengths and limitations for your future development needs."

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