
talking about...

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

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Should you?

"Don't fear failure so much that you refuse to try new things. The saddest summary of a life contains three descriptions: could have, might have, and should have."

... **Louis E. Boone**

It has been said that language reveals as much as it conceals. This little bit of wisdom provides one avenue to developing effective interpretations of a person's way of being by listening to the subtle way in which they use the words they use. This is one of the key skills of an ontological coach and also provides anyone wishing to "read" people better with a tool for their toolkit.

The word "should" is often heard in coaching sessions and is a word that can reveal much about a person's way of being. As such it is a jewel for a coach. The use of the word, "should" speaks to something that does not currently exist for the person saying it and so provides some insight into what might be missing for someone in a given situation. This could relate to the past, the present or the future. Let us look at a few simple examples.

"*I should have done ...*" is one common use of the word "should" that relates to the past and speaks of a decision that has not gone the way one would have liked. It is often linked with a sense of regret and can speak to a current situation that the speaker does not like to *varying degrees*. If we get caught up in too many "should haves" we may well find ourselves living in a mood of resentment and the frustration that goes with that. Too many "should haves" may well have us bound in the past and living a life of regret.

"Should be" is another phrase we commonly hear that has a present focus and speaks of something that should be different now. Once again, the words "should be" are often accompanied by a sense of frustration and impotency. The speaker can be interpreted as wanting something to be different to how they see it and not having much capacity to change the situation.

Finally, we often hear people speak about the future and what they "should do" - "*I should learn how to do that*". Underlying the use of the word "should" in relation to the future, we can listen to some tentativeness regarding the person's belief in the need for something to occur or their capacity to make it occur. Generally, we can listen to this as a declaration with a certain sense that what "should" happen, may well not happen.

Behind the use of the word "should", we find an assumption about how the world ought to be according to the speaker. By being aware of the use of the word, we can listen beyond what is being said and develop interpretations of what is not being said. Coaching is an action focused experience. As a coach or a manager, we will often listen to a person using "should" language. When we do, we can use appropriate coaching techniques to assist them to accept the situation for what it is and find areas where they can have an impact and make a difference. We can then assist them to identify what they **will do** rather than what they should do. In doing so, we can help them to move closer to productive action.

“Do not ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

... Harold Whitman

Singing ...

I received this a little while ago from a friend and fellow coach who lives in South Africa. I found it rather poignant and thought I would share it with you.

When a woman in a certain African tribe knows she is pregnant, she goes out into the wilderness with a few friends and together they pray and meditate until they hear the song of the child.

They recognise that every soul has its own vibration that expresses its unique flavour and purpose. When the women attune to the song, they sing it out loud. Then they return to the tribe and teach it to everyone else.

When the child is born, the community gathers and sings the child's song to him or her. Later, when the child enters education, the village gathers and chants the child's song. When the child passes through the initiation to adulthood, the people again come together and sing. At the time of marriage, the person hears his or her song.

Finally, when the soul is about to pass from this world, the family and friends gather at the person's bed, just as they did at their birth, and they sing the person to the next life.

In the African tribe there is one other occasion upon which the villagers sing to the child. If at any time during his or her life, the person commits a crime or aberrant social act, the individual is called to the centre of the village and the people in the community form a circle around them. Then they sing their song to them.

The tribe recognises that the correction for antisocial behaviour is not punishment; it is love and the remembrance of identity. When you recognise your own song, you have no desire or need to do anything that would hurt another.

A friend is someone who knows your song and sings it to you when you have forgotten it. Those who love you are not fooled by mistakes you have made or dark images you hold about yourself. They remember your beauty when you feel ugly; your wholeness when you are broken; your innocence when you feel guilty; and your purpose when you are confused.

You may not have grown up in an African tribe that sings your song to you at crucial life transitions, but life is always reminding you when you are in tune with yourself and when you are not. When you feel good, what you are doing matches your song, and when you feel awful, it doesn't. In the end, we shall all recognise our song and sing it well. You may feel a little warbly at the moment, but so have all the great singers.

So remember, just keep singing and you'll find your way home.

“So many of our modern management practices come from the Industrial Age. It gave us the belief that you have to control and manage people. It gave us our view of accounting, which makes people an expense and machine assets. Think about it. People are put on P&L statements as an expense; equipment is put on the balance sheet as an investment.

It gave us our carrot-and-stick motivational philosophy – the Great Jackass technique that motivates with a carrot in front (reward) and drives with a stick from behind (fear and punishment)

It gave us centralised budgeting – where trends are extrapolated into the future and hierarchies and bureaucracies are formed to drive “getting the numbers” – an obsolete reactive process that produces “kiss-up” cultures bent on “spending it so we won’t lose it next year” and protecting the backside of your department.

All these practices and many, many more came from the Industrial Age – working with manual workers.

The problem is, managers today are still applying the Industrial Age control model to knowledge workers. Because many in positions of authority do not see true north and the potential of their people and do not possess a complete, accurate understanding of human nature, they manage people as they do things.”

... Steven Covey, “The 8th Habit”

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Talking About Pty Ltd
ACN 112 307 892
info@talkingabout.com.au
Telephone: +61 3 9507 2464
