
talking about...

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

December 2005
Talking About Pty Ltd

On a Personal Note

This is our last newsletter for the year - a year that saw Jacqui and I successfully transition from Gaia Consulting Group into our own business. Our success has been built upon the relationships we have developed over the years and, in celebration of the year that was, we would like to express our gratitude to you.

Nearly 1400 of you receive our newsletter each month and I am always heartened at the many responses of support we receive. If you regularly receive "talking about", I would like to thank you for letting us and our ideas into your world each month. We hope that our words stimulate new ideas, generate reflection and give you an occasional chuckle – maybe even a hearty laugh from time to time. We hope that you will continue to allow us to share a little part your world in the future.

For those of you who have engaged Talking About to work with you and your organisation during the year, we would like to thank you for your trust and support during the year. Obviously without you we would not be able to continue.

For those of you with whom we have personally worked in groups or as individuals, we would like to thank you for sharing your thoughts with us and trusting in us to take care of you and assist you in your learning and journey through life. Your active engagement in our work together makes it a delight for us and, hopefully, a great learning experience for you.

Finally, for those of you who have taken up the challenge and studied ontological coaching with us, Graeme, Jacqui and I would like thank you for your enthusiasm in embracing your study with us. Seeing you progress through your journey to becoming an ontological coach gives us great joy and satisfaction.

Jacqui and I would like to extend to each one of you a fun-filled celebration for the end of 2005 and a healthy, happy and joyful 2006. May it bring you greater self-awareness, more fulfilling relationships and the outcomes you desire.

Warmest regards

Chris Chittenden

Being Authentic

"Even the fear of death is nothing compared to the fear of not having lived authentically and fully."

... Frances Moore Lappe, O Magazine, May 2004

The idea of living or acting authentically has presented itself to me on a number of occasions in recent times and given me pause for reflection over just what it means to be authentic.

My listening to most people's understanding of being authentic is that we are authentic when we act in accordance with the story we have about ourselves. When we do so, we are being true to ourselves. Yet if we act in a way that is inconsistent with our story of who we are, then, by definition, we are not being authentic. When I thought about it, this did not make sense to me.

In ontological coaching, we hold that people observe what they do and then generate a story (an interpretation) about what they have observed that is their self-story. We can say that there is some action and then a story about that action. The story of who we are does not come before the action, yet often we are not able to distinguish the difference. For example, someone might say he has trouble managing his anger, but he would not have thought that about himself before he observed himself be angry in a certain situation. Now clearly there is a flaw in this line of thinking because if this was the case, then we would all have a very accurate story about who we are based on what we have seen ourselves do and this is definitely not the case. The key to understanding this anomaly lies in the way in which we generate our stories. Any new stories about ourselves and the world in general are created from our existing stories, which in turn have an impact on what we observe in the first place.

Let's look at a simple example. Say I hold a story about myself that I am a coward based on a number of experiences I have had in the past. I am walking down the street and notice smoke coming from a building. I also hear a call for help from inside. Without thinking I run inside and help an old lady out of the building. Even though others may see me as a hero for doing this, I will put the event in the context of previous events and I may or may not change my story that I am a coward.

What does all this have with being authentic? Well, we would hold you are always being authentic. Indeed you cannot be any other way as your actions are fact and you will act in coherence with your way of being. This will almost certainly mean that you are not acting according to the story you have about yourself. Indeed, research shows that around two out of every three people are dramatically out of touch with regard to how they see themselves in relation to how others see them. From our point of view, the breakdown exists in our poorly aligned interpretation of our actions not in being authentic or inauthentic.

The good news is this presents an opportunity. Our actions point to what is important to us. It tells us what our values are at a very fundamental level. For example, the primary style for managers in many countries has been shown to be avoidance. Avoidance can be seen as taking care of our security, which is one of the key values people will hold – to protect what they have. When we become more attuned to our actions, we become more attuned to ourselves and what we value. We may not like all that we see, but in many ways, this is better than believing we are acting in a way that we are not.

The key opportunity here lies in looking at our actions to develop our self-awareness and a more aligned self-story. From that starting point, we can better shift our actions to the story we would prefer to have of ourselves.

"All problems become smaller if you don't dodge them, but confront them. Touch a thistle timidly, and it pricks you; grasp it boldly, and its spines crumble."

... William S. Halsey

What does love mean? ...

For many people, this time of year represents a time for family and joy. At the heart of these thoughts for many is love and we would like to share some responses given by a group of four to eight year old children when they were asked "What does love mean?" by a group of professional people. We hope they bring you some joy during the festive season. Thanks to Julie who sent them through to us.

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

Rebecca- age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."

Billy - age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."

Karl - age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."

Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."

Terri - age 4

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."

Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss"

Emily - age 8

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate,"

Nikka - age 6

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, and then he wears it everyday."

Noelle - age 7

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."

Tommy - age 6

"During my piano recital, I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore."

Cindy - age 8

"My mommy loves me more than anybody . You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night."

Clare - age 6

"Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken."

Elaine-age 5

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."

Chris - age 7

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."

Mary Ann - age 4

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."

Lauren - age 4

"When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you."

Karen - age 7

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy on the toilet and she doesn't think it's gross."

Mark - age 6

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

Jessica - age 8

AND ONE FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON ...

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."

Bobby - age 7

No matter how you see love, we wish you much of it in your life! This holiday season, why not take some time out and listen for the love ...

"To me there are three things everyone should do every day. Number one is laugh. Number two is think - spend some time time in thought. Number three; you should have your emotions move you to tears. If you laugh, think and cry, that's a heck of a day."

... Jim Valvano

Our Web Site

More articles and information about our work can be found at our web site, www.talkingabout.com.au. We invite you to take a look.

Subscribing to talking about ...

Do you know others who might be interested in reading our e-zine? If so please feel free to send them a copy or ask them to register by sending an e-mail to info@talkingabout.com.au.

To unsubscribe from this e-zine, simply reply to this e-mail with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject area.

info@talkingabout.com.au
Telephone: +61 3 9507 2464
