
talking about...

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

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Talking About Pty Ltd

The Basis of Relationships

"The majority of people in every culture invest their lives in projects that are defined by their society. They pay attention to what others pay attention to, they experience what others experience. They go to school and learn what should be learned; they work at whatever job is available; they marry and have children according to local customs. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise. Would it be possible to have a stable, predictable life if most people were not conformists? What will it be like if we couldn't count on plumbers doing their jobs, teachers teaching, and doctors abiding by the rules of the medical profession? At the same time, a culture can evolve only if there are few souls who do not play by the usual rules. The men and women we studied made up their rules as they went along, combining luck with their singleness of purpose, until they were able to fashion a 'life theme' that expressed their unique vision while also allowing them to make a living."

... **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi** from "Creativity"

This is the first in a series of articles in which we will explore some ideas about relating to others and how you can potentially look at your own relationships in a new light.

Human beings are "social beings". We are born, we live and we die in communities. We do not know what it is like to live without relating to other human beings. Although this might seem like stating the obvious, it is remarkable how little formal learning goes into being part of these communities. Yet, when coaching our clients it seems that all of the issues they raise ultimately stem from the way they relate to others. To understand why this is so and how we can enhance our relationships to generate better outcomes in our lives, it is valuable to look at the dynamics of how we relate to others.

As a "social being", we live in a dynamic set of relationships with others in our community. Through these relationships, we learn acceptable ways of behaving within those communities – family, friends, workplace, and nation and so on - in which we live. Doing so allows us to fit in and live within those communities. This stems from a basic desire to belong that exists within the healthy human being. We want to fit in with the societies in which we live. In the early days of human development, this was a matter of life and death. Being cast out of a community meant an individual had to fend for themselves in a dangerous world and their chances of doing that without community support was very slim. Even though most of us who live in modern societies do not currently live in a world where our lives are always under threat, we still need the support of our communities to survive and prosper; and so this drive to belong continues to play an important role in life.

To be accepted as part of a community, we must create an **identity** for ourselves consistent with what that community sees is required to be in the community. As we have seen in previous articles, our identity is the story that someone (including ourselves) has about us. In other words, we do not have a single identity, but an identity with each person who has a relationship with us. Others can relate to us even if we do not know them, such as in the case of publicly known people, writers or even characters in the movies or television shows. For example, many people

feel they know movie actors well through watching them on the big screen and reading and hearing about them in the media.

The upshot of this is when we relate to another human being, we are relating to them through our story of who they are. This is a critical distinction. This means that if we want to enhance our relationship with another person, we must understand what story they have of us and also be more aware of the story we have about them. We can only effectively do this by engaging them in conversations and testing our stories – looking for evidence that might support or refute what we hold to be so.

Hence the first means of enhancing our relationships is to better understand that we relate to each other through our stories of ourselves and others. Through this recognition, we can look at the people with whom we do not relate as well as we would like and explore our well-grounded our stories are of them and what might be their stories of us. This awareness can often shed new light on those with whom we relate.

One of the key aspects of our stories of others lies in how much authority we allow them in our lives. This will be the subject of our next newsletter.

"Einstein said that the problems we have created cannot be solved with the same thinking that created them. And this is the hope that we have: that in the very dangerous and precarious global situations that we are in today, we could prepare the breeding ground and the fertile soil and the habitats to generate what the next models of existence will be. We have reached that stage where our successes and our failures have produced problems that we simply cannot solve, in the old Einsteinian sense, at the same level that they were created. Now is the time to begin once again, as Clare W. Graves would say this never-ending quest of ours."

... Dr Don Beck – Creator of Spiral Dynamics

Being the Leader ...

We do not know who authored this, but it resonated with us ...

I went on a search to become a leader.

I searched high and low. I spoke with authority. People listened. Alas, there was one who was wiser than I, and they followed that person.

I sought to inspire confidence, and the crowd responded: "Why should I trust you?" I postured, and I assumed the look of leadership with a countenance that flowed with confidence and pride. And many passed me by and did not notice my air of elegance.

I ran ahead of the others and pointed the way to new heights. I showed that I knew the route to greatness and then looked back and discovered I was alone.

"What shall I do?" I queried. "I've tried hard and used all that I knew". I sat down and pondered. And then I listened to voices around me. I heard what the group was trying to accomplish. I rolled up my sleeves and joined in the work.

As we worked, I asked: "Are we all together in what we want to do and how to get the job done?"

And we thought together, and fought together, and struggled toward our goal. I found myself encouraging the faint-hearted. I sought ideas of those too shy to speak out. I taught those who had little skill. I praised those who worked hard. When our task was completed, one of the group turned to me and said: "This would not have been done but for your leadership."

At first I said: "I didn't lead. I just worked with the rest." And then I understood leadership is not a goal; it is a way of reaching a goal. I lead best when I help others to go where we've decided

to go. I lead best when I help others to use themselves creatively. I lead best when I forget about myself as a leader and focus on my group ... their needs and their goals.

To lead is to serve ... to give ... to achieve together.

"The best and most beautiful things cannot be seen or touched - they must be felt with the heart"

... **Helen Keller**

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