



talking about...

July 2006

... **designing better relationships for better outcomes**

A newsletter for those interested in ontological coaching

Timely Conversations

Last month, we discussed the idea that we use language to create boundaries and those boundaries generate separation. This month, we would like to continue the theme of boundaries and look at how we apply this to our sense of everyday living.

As we have said in previous newsletters, human beings live in language and usually do not see that we do this. One of the key aspects of our use of language is that through it we generate a keen sense of time. Indeed even though we can easily see that we always live in the moment or the "now", we struggle to actually define what "now" is. Life can be said to be a continual experience of "now", yet we have a clear sense of the past and the future and as such we are constantly crossing boundaries between the past, the present and the future.

You may recall that we define three types of conversation – descriptive, speculative and action. Descriptive conversations relate to what we already perceive to exist. In other words, they relate to the past. On the other hand, speculative and action conversations relate to what might exist or might be done. In other words, these two types of conversation relate to the future. Given that we create a boundary between the past and the future, it is often a significant challenge to move from descriptive to speculative and action conversations on a given issue.

Our observation is that people in general spend by far the largest amount of their time in descriptive conversations. The value of descriptive conversations lies in being able to orient ourselves to the world as we perceive it and ultimately create a context for our decisions and actions in the future. As we are social beings, this usually involves creating a shared context with others. Hence it follows that people spend most of their time in a past conversational context. The value of speculative and action conversations lies in the way in which our future will unfold. None of these types of conversation are more important than the others, but as we have seen boundaries create a sense of resistance to be overcome. As we spend more time caught in descriptive conversations about the past moving to conversations about the future can often be a significant challenge.

Since the basis of coaching, leadership and any act of influencing is future focused, this challenge shows up as critical. Very often, people will want to hang onto what they perceive they already have and will not want change. It is useful to understand that the key here does not lie just in a wonderful vision of the future and the possibilities it represents or some brilliant logic about why and how this can be achieved, it must also include a shared context of what is. The greater this sharing, the more likely there is to be less resistance to a different future.

"When an action doesn't come naturally to you, it is a greater expression of love."

... Gary Chapman, "The Five Love Languages"

Are you a teacher or an Educator?

According to a news report, a certain private school in Washington was recently faced with a unique problem.

A number of 12-year-old girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. That was fine, but after they put on their lipstick they would press their lips to the mirror leaving dozens of little lip prints. Every night the maintenance man would remove them and the next day the girls would put them back.

Finally, the principal decided that something had to be done. She called all the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the maintenance man. She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian who had to clean the mirrors every night. To demonstrate how difficult it had been to clean the mirrors, she asked the maintenance man to show the girls how much effort was required.

He took out a long-handled squeegee, dipped it in the toilet, and cleaned the mirror with it. Since then, there have been no lip prints on the mirror.

There are teachers . . . And then there are educators!

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"In coaching, problems are not resolved. They are dissolved."

... **Julio Olalla, The Oracle of Coaching**

More Interesting Links

This month, we would like to introduce you to a web site that speaks to how we like to be loved and appreciated. Based on Dr. Gary Chapman's book, "The Five Love Languages", it explores how we each like to be loved and appreciated. This is not just a web site for personal relationships, but also speaks to who we can generate a greater sense of care for others in the work place. There are some great ideas here that might help you learn how to value and appreciate those around you better. The web site can be found at <http://www.fivelovelanguages.com/>.

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.

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