



talking about...

December 2006

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

A newsletter for those interested in ontological coaching

On A Personal Note

This is our last newsletter for the year - a year that saw Jacqui and I continue successfully with our coaching work, but more challenged on personal front dealing with a number of family illnesses and the death of loved ones.

As with each year, we like to look back on what we valued during the year and express our gratitude to those who helped us or shared our journey.

As a regularly recipient of "talking about", we would like to thank you for letting us and our ideas into your world each month. We feel privileged that you allow us to share our thoughts with you each month. 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 2006 and a healthy, happy and successful 2007. May it bring you greater self-awareness, more fulfilling relationships and the outcomes you desire.

Warmest Regards

Chris Chittenden

The Control Myth

"You have no control over what the other guy does. You only have control over what you do."

... A. J. Kitt

Most people seek control in their lives. Indeed for many it is a major compulsion that has them go to extraordinary lengths to try and gain certainty over their future. One of the major areas of control that people seek is control over others. Although most people don't do this with any awareness, it is an unspoken backdrop to many relationships. Parents

should control their kids; managers should control their staff; captains should control their teams; the list goes on and on.

What does this desire for control mean? Control over others involves being able to get them to do what you want when you want them to do it. However, given that human beings always have the possibility of choice about what they do, if we are to control others then we must remove their capacity to choose, as with another's ability to choose there can be no certainty of control over them. Through the ages those who seek control over others have used a variety of strategies to remove the capacity of others to choose or to reduce their choices to a single proposition. Generally these strategies have involved the creation of fear in those who are to be controlled. The use of violence and threat has played a significant role in this creation. Yet, as long as human beings retain free will, control remains a myth.

In an organisational setting, many managers seek to control their employees and work processes. Such managers are characterised by the lack of trust they show in those who work with them - from the manager's perspective these people work for them, and indeed, they are not thought of as people, rather as resources. These managers always feel they could do a better job than others and therefore are loathe to delegate work to them. When they do delegate, they micro-manage their staff, wanting to know everything they do. In their fervour to gain

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control and therefore certainty over the outcomes, they do not see that they damage their situation by minimising the choice for others. They may gain a sense of control, although this is never fully satisfied, but they reduce the quality of the outcomes their group achieves.

We hold the belief that the only person we can control is ourselves. That control is based on our self-awareness and, as a result, even our control over ourselves is limited. Why? As we have seen in previous newsletters, most of our actions are habitual and outside of our awareness. As control is intentional it requires awareness. Hence, we can gain greater control over ourselves by enhancing our self-awareness. Rather than control others, we can influence them and this is based on the relationship we have with them. The key question for that influence is "how much do they trust us?" If we hold a belief that we can control others, we look for ways to manipulate and maneuver them to our own ends. We may get some of the outcomes we want, but at a cost. When dealing with situations we invite you to look at solutions in terms of what you can control – actions you can take; and who do you need to influence as a way of resolving your issues.

"Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction."

... Antoine de Saint-Exupery, 1900 -1944, Author

Food for thought ...

Why does someone point their hand at a watch when they ask for time when others don't point to their crotch when they ask for the toilet?

Why do people prefer to walk all over the room looking for a remote when they can just walk over to the TV and change the channel manually?

When a product is "new and improved", is it new, where there has never been anything before it; or improved where there's an improvement over something before it, so it couldn't be new?

Why do people say that "life is short" when it's the longest thing one can do in a lifetime?

Why would someone still ask a fellow bus-stand passenger if the bus has arrived knowing that if the bus has come, he/she won't still be standing there?

If a person owns a piece of land, do they own it all the way down to the center of the earth?

Why is it called alcoholics anonymous when the first thing you do is stand up and say "hi, my name's Bob. I'm an alcoholic"?

Why is there a light in the fridge but not in the freezer?

Why does mineral water that has trickled through mountains for centuries have a "best before" date?

Why do toasters always have a setting on them which burns your toast to a horrible crisp no one would eat?

Who was the first person to look at a cow and say "I think I'll squeeze these dangly things here and drink what comes out"?

If Wile E coyote has enough money to buy all that Acme crap why doesn't he buy his dinner?

Did you ever notice that if you blow in a dog's face it goes mad, yet when you take him on a car ride he sticks his head straight out the window?

If you bring a fake bomb aboard a plane, will the probability of a real bomb on the same plane be lower?

*"The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-
changin'."*

... Bob Dylan, "The times they are a-changin'"

More Interesting Links

If you are looking for free resources, tools and inspiration for the ethical development of people, business and organisations then you might enjoy the businessballs web site at www.businessballs.com

"The past is a source of knowledge, and the future is a source of hope. Love of the past implies faith in the future."

... Stephen Ambrose (1936 - 2002), in Fast Company

Our Web Site

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