



talking about...

May 2007

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

A newsletter for those interested in ontological coaching

Our Moods are Contagious

"An eye can threaten like a loaded and leveled gun, or it can insult like hissing or kicking; or, in its altered mood, by beams of kindness, it can make the heart dance for joy."

... Ralph Waldo Emerson, (1803 - 1882) US philosopher, poet, essayist

Do you ever feel sad then find yourself in a group of happy joyous people and feel uplifted? Or maybe the opposite has happened to you, where you are feeling great and get dragged down by others who appear frustrated and angry. Research over a number of years has shown that we can catch the moods and emotions of those around. It is very likely that if you hang around with optimistic and constructive people then you will generally find yourself in a similar frame of mind. And similarly, the reverse is also valid. In the ongoing presence of pessimistic and unenthusiastic people, you are likely to find yourself feeling the same way. Studies have also shown that certain emotions, most notably, excitement, happiness, sadness, and anger seem to be more contagious than others. These studies have also found that we are more likely to catch the moods and emotions of those close to us or with whom we spend a lot of time. It would seem that there is a great deal of connectedness between our own emotional states and those with whom we spend a lot of time.

It is easy to look at this research and focus on the people with whom we spend time and look at the impact of their moods on us. We would like to consider this from a different perspective. Other research in this area has shown that within a short period of engaging in a conversation with another person, the two people involved will find themselves in similar physical states. Breathing patterns will be similar, body postures will synchronised in some way and emotional states will match. As we have seen in previous articles, our emotional state is a predisposition for our actions, including our way of thinking about a given situation.

One of the key aspects of coaching or leading others is to generate an emotional state that is conducive to moving towards our desired outcomes. Hence, given that emotional states are contagious in some way, it follows that if you can catch other people's moods, they can also catch yours. Simply put, in any conversation, you can greatly influence the emotional state of that conversation by managing your emotional space. If you can stay calm in the face of another's frustration or anger, then soon enough they will most likely calm down. If you feel excited about the possibilities you see, others may well become excited too. Conversely, your frustration can easily become another's frustration and so on.

We have spoken before about how we can control ourselves through awareness and choice. Our emotional state is one example, where we can learn to manage our emotional state more effectively through self-awareness of our moods and emotions and developing strategies and habits that will allow us to greatly influence the conversations we have and, as a result, the outcomes we achieve.

"I don't wait for moods. You accomplish nothing if you do that. Your mind must know it has got to get down to earth."

... Pearl Buck (1892 - 1973)
US author

Saying the right thing at the right time ...

A friend of ours sent this one through, not sure of its origins, but it made us laugh!

Jack wakes up at home with a huge hangover he can't believe. He forces himself to open his eyes, and the first thing he sees is a couple of aspirin next to a glass of water on the side table. And, next to them, a single red rose! He sits down and sees his clothing in front of him, all clean.

Jack looks around the room and sees that it is in perfect order, spotlessly clean. He takes the aspirins, cringes when he sees a huge black eye staring back at him in the bathroom mirror, and notices a note on the table: "*Honey, breakfast is on the stove, I left early to go shopping. Love you!*"

He stumbles to the kitchen and sure enough, there is a hot breakfast and the morning newspaper. His son is also at the table, eating.

Jack asks, "*Son...what happened last*

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night?"

"Well, you came home after 3 am, drunk out of your mind. You broke some furniture, puked in the hallway, and got that black eye when you ran into the door."

"So, why is everything in such perfect order, so clean, I have a rose, and breakfast is on the table waiting for me?"

His son replies, "Oh THAT! Mum dragged you to the bedroom, and when she tried to take your trousers off, you screamed, "Leave me alone, you tart, I'm married!"

Broken furniture \$85.26
Hot Breakfast \$4.20
Red Rose bud \$3.00
Two Aspirins \$0.38
Saying the right thing, at the right time... Priceless...

"We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine."

... Dwight L. Moody, US evangelist

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