



talking about...

July 2007

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

Success or Failure ...

"Most people think of success and failure as opposites, but they both are products of the same process."

... Roger von Oech in "The Speaker's Electronic Reference Collection,"

We have spoken in the past about some of the "language traps" in which people find themselves. These language traps relate to the stories an individual has of the world thereby narrowing their view of the world and the actions they can see to take. Many language traps are found in the black and white nature of a story. For example, if I hold that something is "right" then all other options can easily become "wrong". The use of such language is liable to create an "either/or" response to a situation and as result limit my possibilities as once I see something as "right", I will largely ignore other alternatives.

This "either/or" approach can lead to a potential language trap in the concept of success and failure. Even though many people are able to see success on a spectrum, for some this is not the case. These people hold a black and white view of success and anything less than complete success is seen as a failure. Such people often show up as the "perfectionists" of this world, where the focus is on attaining unrealistic outcomes and where mistakes cannot be tolerated. The focus for such people tends to be on what is missing and their conversations will reflect this.

The black and white view of success and the focus on what is missing means that what has been achieved is inclined to be overlooked or outweighed by what has not been done. This often leads to feelings of inadequacy. Although it is useful to have goals and to seek to achieve them, it is also important to generate feelings of accomplishment in order to enhance the possibility of achieving the next set of goals. Hence if we cannot see that there is value in what we have done, even though we may have not completely achieved what we set out to do, we are likely to develop a lesser story of ourselves and therefore trap ourselves in another way. We may begin to believe that we are not good enough and that we cannot succeed.

We see the outcomes of the black and white story of success in people who feel they have not achieved and deems themselves a failure even though it could be said that they had achieved a great deal. They are often people who have defined or been given unrealistic goals and not been able or willing to question these goals. In many ways, they were set up to feel unsuccessful even though they were able to accomplish a great deal. When you find yourself in the situation of establishing your own or other people's goals, we encourage you to be realistic in what can be achieved and celebrate what has been achieved rather than emphasise what is missing.

A correction ...

In our last newsletter, we incorrectly credited Fernando Flores with the quote, "Show me someone who is suffering and I will show you someone who is not making enough requests." Our friend, Peter Thorneycroft pointed out to us that the quote came from Werner Erhard and not Flores.

"Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers."

... Robert Half, US personnel-agency executive

Food for thought...

Here is something to get you thinking.

You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect man or woman you have been dreaming about.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing that there could only be one passenger in your car?

Think before you continue reading.

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This is a moral/ethical dilemma that was once actually used as part of a job application.

You could pick up the old lady, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first; or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back.

However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again.

The candidate who was hired (out of 200 applicants) had no trouble coming up with his answer.

WHAT DID HE SAY?

He simply answered: "I would give the car keys to my old friend, and let him take the lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams."

Never forget to "Think Outside of the Box".

"Inspiration never arrived when you were searching for it."

... Lisa Alther, US novelist

A Book of Interest

One of our graduate coaching students, Margie Warrell has gone into print with her new book, "Find Your Courage". In her book, she provides the reader with insights to stepping outside of their comfort zone and expanding their horizons.

As our colleague Graeme Schache has said, *"This book is, in my assessment, an excellent, no-nonsense, easy-to-read book that is a must read for all people of all ages and in all walks of life. Margie addresses the key issues that limit most people from achieving their dreams and individual greatness whilst carefully taking the reader through great strategies on how to overcome them. Find Your Courage! includes many examples you will find relevant to your own life experiences. I will be recommending this book to many of my clients as their personal handbook."*

We invite you to take a look at www.findyourcourage.com.

Our Web Site

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