



The Dance of Development Part 2: The Journey Outward

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“My personal challenge is to be a question asker – one that facilitates conversations from the “inside out” and “outside in” that lead to greater discoveries of our own deepest intents and what matters most to each of us.” – Rich Green, 2004

This article is in response to my last column, “Small Discovery Groups.” Thank you for reading, engaging, and contacting me. After a “Journey Inward” it is appropriate to respond with some “Journeys Outward” to anchor our inward experiences to new intentions and new discoveries.

Last time, I wrote mostly about the journey inward. Today we are, living at the interface between our history and our dreams! Our challenge is to uncover our histories and ponder our loftiest dreams, and thereby come to know ourselves. Our challenge is to be mindful. Do you “hear” your quiet yearnings?

The intention of the “inside work” (Know Yourself) is to move repeatedly to the “outside” world with a greater sense of competence and confidence in ourself and with a deep commitment to others. This is the true genius of Dr. Pankey’s “Cross of Dentistry,” a reinforcement for his following statement. “Behaviorally, we cannot take someone where we have not been.”

Often as I sit down to write an article for this newsletter, I have a sense of uneasiness because there is very limited opportunity for a two-way conversation! This certainly is not the case when I begin discussion with a small group face to face – even one that is largely unknown to me. As I sit here writing, I ask myself, “In what way can I make contact with you when your histories, expectations, and attitudes are unknown to me?”

When talking about developmental leadership, interpersonal relationships and a person’s journey of self-discovery, I have no desire to tell you what your thoughts, feelings, or actions should be, but I do have the intention to impact you and encourage you to make the journey inward and the journey outward.

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Living on the Gulf Coast, as I do, I find significance in the metaphor that self-discovery small group discussions are like “Tidal” behavior. When we expose our inner thoughts to those we trust, we come to a better understanding of ourselves. We can then move forward with our intentions more openly and surely.

Sharing the power of our own voice while allowing space for another’s voice is about learning to share the governance of a conversation. Small group sessions should allow time for reflection on both individual and group experiences, then time for feedback. It is not about controlling for perfect outcomes but about deepening awarenesses and continual skill development that can be carried to other venues in our lives such as family, office team and patient interaction and development.

With new awareness, you can reach out to others and invite them to join you in defining the purpose of your relationship and deciding what your relationship will become. As in small group discussions, you need to be careful not to speak for others even if you perceive you have been given permission to do so. For in so doing, you would inadvertently diminish their personhood, take away their unique

voice, initiative and opportunity for development.

Your goal is to learn to live in the “tension” between dependency and ownership, something that we expect our patients to do as we encourage them to move from “Crisis to Proactive” health choices. Recalling the words “Behaviorally, we cannot take someone where we have not been,” I encourage you to practice these behaviors prior to asking others to do the same!

A committed small group provides a venue for you to develop competence and confidence in your voice. As we experience the “dance” of relationship, we have the opportunity to occasionally stop the “music,” examine the “position” we have assumed, talk about it, and then start again. An intimacy develops that allows this interaction to work. Through this work together, we can learn to gently hold trust for one another, practice it, and once again extend ourselves to others.

My experience in facilitating small groups is that, as we begin our journey inward and our journey outward, it is often similar to simultaneously having a foot on the “accelerator of participation” and a foot on the “brake of control.” During the process, trust and corporate determination emerge – though not without

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some wrestling. A partnership emerges that carries the intention of balanced power between our self and others.

The uneasiness we all may feel, at different levels and at different times, is a small sign of the need to dive deeper into those feelings and be mindful of what is attached. There can be a growing awareness of all our life events that have attached themselves to a subject. I appreciate each person's efforts to open up and touch those areas, sometimes for the first time and not run away from an uneasiness that may appear. There is a need for honesty and integrity around many of our tough issues. It involves a willingness to stay at a boundary where an awareness of our feelings and values challenge our openness (vulnerability). In time, there is the potential of increased congruence in our life between what holds great meaning for us and how we act daily on those beliefs!

The experience of talking and wrestling with what is "inside" in the presence of others builds community, intimacy, and powerful personal growth that can be rolled over on our "work" in the "outside" world. Because we often have experienced our "true" self and our conflicts, shared with close friends, and probed the connections to our present, past and deeply held values, those

episodes bring enhanced meaning to our lives.

In all the small group activities, if we feel accepted, flaws and all, and loved unconditionally, we can provide environments for others outside our "intimate circle" to have similar experiences. This is powerful in the healing/health professions. We also gain a number of new awarenesses that work on us or allow us to work-on them while we do the "stuff" of everyday living; like chopping wood and carrying water! n

Authors Note: *I will spend time in the future considering the more issues surrounding the "Dance of Development. In the meantime, I can be reached at Evergreen Consulting Group, Inc 239-472-7295 or on-line at evergreenconsultinggroup.com.*

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