

THE 4TH CIRCLE

JOE ANDERSON, PHD



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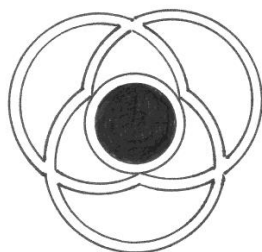
The 4th Circle:

How we fall into stress, & how to climb back out

A novel of sorts

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Joe Anderson, PhD

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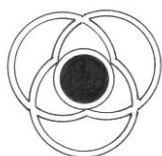
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Chapter 1

BRAD

*“Why in the hell
won’t these assholes do
what I tell them to do?”*

If you have people reporting to you, you’ve probably said the same; maybe even a more colorful version of it. I heard just such a rendition this morning from one of the best CEOs I know. It was a thing of beauty, replete with the bluest prose and rambling flourishes of threat and invective. It inspired me to start this book tonight.

That, plus the fact that he had a stroke and died right in the middle of his performance.

It makes you wonder if authority is dangerous to your health.

The facts tell us that the stress involved is gonna kill us, but first, it’s going to irritate everyone around us.

- Seventeen thousand, three hundred executives died last year, from the stress of trying to be in control. Seventeen thousand.
- Add to that their 17,000 spouses and 35,000 kids suddenly orphaned and that’s 70,000 folks who had a very bad year because of work related stress. But that’s small potatoes, compared to the following facts.

- Before they died, those 17,300 executives crushed 86,500 employees. You know --- crushed --- publicly attacked, humiliated and belittled in a manner that kills the urge to give their best effort. Those folks had a bad year and probably a bad life as well. Not much is worse than working for a fire-breathing, anal-retentive control freak.

But wait. It gets even better.

- Those 86,500 crushed individuals have 4 times more sick days than the non-crushed;
- plus, when they *are* there, they're only about 57% as effective as the non-crushed --- because they're busy keeping a low profile, staying out of trouble and making sure that anything that goes wrong is someone else's fault.
- But that still doesn't seem to help them, because their turnover rate is about 6 times higher than for the non-crushed.

Just ponder that for a moment. That's a lot of transition costs, training costs and ramp-up expenses. Not to mention, legal expenses.

Who do you think sues their employer?

Take your time.

Everybody already knows.

Yep. It's the ones you tried to crush. Some of them fight back --- then you've got one heck of a mess on your hands --- and your stress goes up yet again, and you end up crushing another truck load of folks who just showed up for work today hoping for a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.

And the parade continues.

- Those 86,500 folks who were crushed by the original 17,300 executives who are no longer among the living --- they turned around and crushed 366,000 more --- because humans do not like to suffer alone. We pass along our misfortunes so that we can have company in our misery.

If you've done the math, you can see that this means that stress grows by a factor of five, while most infections only grow by a factor of 2. So I'm thinking that stress may just be the most infectious scourge known to man.

The contagion often goes on for another iteration or two, but let's stop the process in its tracks and take stock of the situation.

There are 452,500 crushed employees, who emanated from the original 17,300 who died.. So What? Well ...

- 8,700 of them will die from stress within the next 3 years
- 61,500 will change jobs within 18 months
- 295,000 of them have 4 times more absences than normal
- 452,500 of them will be only 67% as productive as normal
- And here's the kicker – those 17,300 hyper-controlling bosses who started the whole process were only 70% as productive as other managers

We lose \$13.6 Billion a year due to stressed-out, mismanaging bosses.

And that's just in New York City.

...

The actual cost of stress in America is in the Trillions.

Stress will kill you, my friend. But it doesn't have to be that way. Despite strong evidence to the contrary, I cling to the belief that it *is* possible to be in charge (of a firm, division, department, or work crew) without killing yourself in the process. In fact, I still think that it's possible to have a successful career and a rich, meaningful - and long - life, simultaneously. That's what this book is about.

I serve as Consigliere to America's owners. Business owners. I am part business strategist, part shrink, part drill sergeant, and part pastor. In some respects I play Alfred to their Batman. I get them ready for battle, and sew them back together afterward. We do it mostly via conversation. I was having one of those conversations this morning, when everything spun out of control.

His name was Brad. He was a fine man, and one of the shrewdest entrepreneurs it has been my pleasure to know. Chairman of his church. Beautiful wife. Three great kids, two still in elementary school. And I failed to save his life today.

So instead, I'm gonna try to save yours.

We're going to do that by using "Drift Therapy". We'll drift between fact, commentary and conversation without clear delineation. I'm going to converse with Brad off and on throughout this book. Some of it will be actual conversations we've had, some of it will be conversations I've actually had with other CEOs, and some of it will be conversations I should have had with either one. All of it will be a conversation I am having with you.

Here's the thing about drift therapy, though. It doesn't actually pack itself into a nice neat 2-hour session. Life isn't that sweet. Instead, the conversation reported here rolled itself out over many months during the first year of the Obama administration,

when the world was in a massive recession and uncertainty lurked around every corner.

It was a time of acute stress and anxiety, so the language here will be unfiltered and rough, because that is how life is lived, and talked about, in the stress-filled world. About 10% of the CEOs I work with can't speak without obscenities. They put one in every sentence, just to keep their tongue in shape. Another 30% will wax obscene, and creatively so, when they are under pressure. The bulk of CEOs, however, right around 50%, use it sparingly, as an exclamation point, just to let you know when something is serious. And 10% are verbal teetotalers. They never swear. So we know that their inherent obscenity works its way out in even more creative ways.

Obscenity is a language like any other, so when confronted with a native speaker I adopt the dialect myself so that I can be understood. When you listen to its rhythm you'll notice that it is actually a 3rd party in the conversation.

I've also left in the obscenity because I believe that folks say exactly what they mean.

- ❖ Brad's last words could have been, "How, in heaven's name, do I get these ladies and gentlemen to help me in my quest?"
- ❖ If so, they probably wouldn't have been his last words; because a man who speaks like that doesn't have the same level of stress as the guy who used Brad's words. And he wouldn't have been struggling with that extreme level of stress for the past year or two, and he wouldn't have had a massive stroke, and he wouldn't have died.

No. Brad said exactly what he meant. He didn't care about HOW. He cared about WHY. He saw his employees as assholes out to screw him, not as ladies and gentlemen eager to help him. And he wasn't interested in their help; he just

wanted their obedience. He said what he meant, in the way that he meant it, and lived it, and ultimately died from it. So as both a therapist and as a forensic linguist, it's important to retain the words as Brad uttered them. I apologize if the language offends you, but frankly, Brad's death offends me more; and I'm trying to save a life here. A very important one ... Yours ... So I hope you'll cut me a little slack.

Finally, I should point out to you that I'm a fan of the Socratic method. That is the debriefing method where each answer holds the seed of the next question, not the endpoint of a discussion. I like it for its ability to drill down to the prime cause of a problem; cutting through the conscious and unconscious BS and buffers we place between ourselves and the truth. And I like it for the strategic direction it gives us for pursuing any effort to help one another.

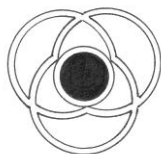
"The answer is in the question.

It is not in the response to the question."

It amounts to the marching orders for the psychic detective. So when Brad blurted out his angry question ...

*"Why in hell won't these assholes
do what I tell them?"*

... he gave us the road map for this book. All we're going to do is walk back through the question one word or phrase at a time. Join me.



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not just business.
It cuts across
all disciplines**

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Chapter 2

WHY

“It’s not the opposable thumb,” I said.

“The what?”

“The thumb. It’s not the thumb.”

“What’s not the thumb?” Brad asked.

“The thing that differentiates us from house plants.”

“I see,” he chuckled. “Ok. I’ll bite. What separates us from the lowly house plant?”

“A plant never asks why it ended up in a pot. We do. *‘Cogito. Ergo, sum.’* ‘I think. Therefore, I am.’”

“Yeh, that may be so,” Brad said, “but if you cogito your sum around here one more time I’m gonna stick you in a pot.”

I smiled. I got an offer to play for the Chicago Bears & weigh in at over 270 pounds. A guy built like me gets to smile. A lot. “The point is well taken, my friend. No more Latin. I promise.”

“Good”

“But the point is valid, none the less. People think. And they think a lot about why stuff happens. And they think a lot about why they should or shouldn’t do something – from running a red light to falling in line with one of your edicts. People do things for a reason; which means what?”

“Which means that maybe I need to change my mind about caring why they do things?” hazarded Brad. “Look, I’m not a psychologist. That crap is just a bowl of oatmeal that wastes my time.”

I was stunned by the mixed metaphor. The image of oatmeal clogging a clock overwhelmed me. “Maybe you already know more than you think.” I said. How about a little quiz? A bear jumps out of the bushes. ... Quick, what are your options?”

“Run or fight.”

“You run?”

“Damn straight”

“You’re in the middle of nowhere, in winter, in your Bermuda shorts. The bear has a heart attack and keels over. What do you do?”

“Eat him and make a robe or shelter or some darn thing out of his fur.”

“And your favorite movie starlet walks by?”

“Ummm --- Oh! I offer her a little food, shelter and horizontal mambo lessons.”

“Think you’ll tell her how you killed the bear?”

“It died of old age.”

“And that’s gonna score you a mambo lesson?”

“Oh, right. I ripped off its jaw bone and beat him to death with it.”

“Not bad. But why do you tell her such a whopper.”

“It makes me look good. Improves my chances.”

“Spring comes. You, the starlet and the mambo offspring are rescued. You write a book. Make millions. You’re set for life. What do you do?”

“Ah ... I always wanted to do hang gliding.”

“Bingo!” I purr. “You should teach at Harvard. You just did a complete rendition of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs ---

considered by some to be the bedrock of motivational psychology.”

1. Immediate Survival – fight or flight
2. Long term survival – food & shelter
3. Affiliation – getting laid, companionship, love
4. Esteem--- find a way to look (or be) worthy
5. Self actualization – the freedom to do whatever you wish

“Not bad” said Brad. “So how do I use it?”

“You don’t” says I. “It’s bull.”

“Bullshit?”

“Well, the academic term is Toro-poo-poo. The point is that Maslow’s Theory might be a little complex. For instance, where were you at the beginning of the story?”

“Wait a minute.” Said Brad. “Is this still Maslow’s thing – or are we doing something different?”

“Oh, this is very different I said. “So where were you?”

“With the bear? I was just walking around, apparently looking for an opportunity to play someone’s straight man.”

“Good” I laughed. “Let’s call that place ‘POINT A’. Then a bear appeared and you went to ...?”

“Point B?”

“Yes!” I chortled. “Point B! Why’d you go to point B?”

“It seemed the functional thing to do,” said Brad. “There was no bear at POINT B.”

“Bravooo,” I intoned. “That is exceptional. Sometimes we go from Point A to Point B simply because it’s the functional thing to do. I’m thirsty, so I get a drink of water. I’m tired, so I turn out the light. We do hundreds of things each day, for no

other reason than that we want to get from Point A to Point B. If we over-analyze things we create a real mess.”

“Amen” said Brad. He’s an old Lutheran.

“But as Ron Poppeil is fond of saying ‘But wait! There’s more.’”

“Of course there is” said Brad. “There’s always more.”

“Why’d you lie through your teeth about killing the bear? I asked.

“You told me to” Brad fired back.

“Never did,” said I.

“You did too”

“Nope.”

“You sure?”

“Yep”

“How so?”

“It’s my book.”

“Ah... you’re right,” said Brad. “I made up that whopper on my own.”

“I thought so. Why was that?”

“To get her under my bear skin.”

“Why would she be willing to do that? You’re not all that good looking.” His turn to laugh. He had been captain of the swim team at a Big Ten school and still looked the part – 6’2”, lean and long muscled. Never, ever, make a joke at someone else’s expense.

He took my cue, though, “I told her the story so she’d know I could protect her. By the way, is she in Bermuda shorts, too?”

“It’s your fantasy, Bubba. If you want her in shorts, she’s in shorts. Doesn’t matter to me. But once again, you’ve hit a home run. She crawled under your skin because she saw you as competent. You were an alpha male. You killed a frickin’

bear --- with your bare hands, for God sake. If she wants to survive, she's gonna exercise her expertise as a woman by sidling up to the man holding the jawbone. She's trading her competence for yours. Competence. Say it with me brethren. The 2nd element in this new model is competence. People do things either to exercise their competence, or to make up for NOT having it."

"Wait a second" mused Brad. "That sounds like a perfect description of practical jokes."

"Yep. They're a classic case of 'I'm incompetent so I'll make you look incompetent too. That way, no one will notice my shortcomings."

"Hmmm" said Brad. "Are you saying that folks who truly feel competent, never pull practical jokes on others?"

"Never is a long time, Brad. I'd feel better if you erased the word 'never' and replaced it with the word 'don't'".

"OK. Try this. Competent people don't pull practical jokes. Better?"

"Perfect."

"Ok" said Brad. "I got it. People do things to get from Point A to Point B --- or to *enjoy* the trip from A to B --- because of their competence. Is that it?"

"Partially. But we're getting there. Here's the big question. If a bear dies in the woods but there's no one to listen to the stories you make up about it, is there glory?"

"No"

"Why not?"

"Glory needs an audience."

"Yes!! Why?"

"I don't know. And I'm tired. And my head hurts."

“Come on Brad. Buck up. Here’s the \$20,000 answer. Glory occurs in YOUR head. Not the audience’s. All they give you is affirmation. Your fertile little brain is what turns it into glory. And what it is that turns the one into the other is beyond us. We don’t know. For some people, a private word or a quiet pat on the back are all they need for their glory fix. Others need the roar of the grease paint and the smell of the crowd. Anything less doesn’t cross the glory threshold. And you know what that’s all about?” I asked.

“What’s the right answer here?”

“Acceptance.”

“Acceptance,” he said. “It doesn’t matter whether we’re talking about the roar of the crowd or the hum of a single friend, we’re all driven by the need for acceptance --- or, wait for it, I remember this --- or by the lack of acceptance in our lives.”

“That’s it, kiddo.”

Brad perked up. “So that’s it?”

“Yep”

“So it’s a 3 part model as compared to Maslow’s 5-partner?”

“Yep”

1. “Function
2. Competence
3. Acceptance”

“That’s shorter then.”

“By two points. Count ‘em.”

“And whose theory is this?”

“Mine”

“Really?”

“Yep. Journal articles. The works.”

“No kidding?”

“No kidding.

“So you’re a bona fide egghead?”

“Yeh. That’s the word I was searching for.”

“I like that,” beamed Brad. “I got me a real live academician, here. What else can you tell me?”

“It’s bullshit,” I said.

“I’m sorry. The theory is bullshit?”

“Nah. The model is perfectly good. Better than most, in fact.”

“But?”

“Let me ask you a question. A bear jumps out of the bushes. Slobber everywhere. You’ve got ‘Lunch’ tattooed on your forehead ... At that precise point in time did you say to yourself ‘Quick. Should I use Maslow’s model or Anderson’s to solve this dilemma?’ ”

“Nope. I just ran like hell.”

“Exactly! In the heat of battle, theories and models go out the window. They are pure and utter bullshit.”

Brad stood up. “Why in the hell did we spend all that time learning this crap then? I knew it then. It was an utter waste of time. I wasted 16 years of my life in school, learning worthless shit. I’ve been saying that all my life.”

“And you’ve been wrong your entire life. Sit down, Brad.”

He plopped back in the chair. “What?! You just said they were bullshit. I heard you.”

“*In the heat of battle* they’re bullshit. In the heat of battle. The rest of the time, they’re priceless.”

“I don’t get it.”

“I know. A lot of people don’t get it. That’s why we do such a crappy job of changing behavior. Let me give you a few bullet points on this.

1. It is absolutely crucial that you have a model in your head regarding what makes people tick.
2. That model creates the context in which all of your ‘heat of battle’ decisions occur
3. But, in the heat of battle you’re using gut instinct, not a model. You’re just getting from point A to Point B.”

Dead pause for a moment, then Brad ventured “Something beats nothing every time, huh?”

“Yep.”

“That’s a bit shallow, don’t you think?”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because of Pastor Peterson” said Brad. Then he grinned “Sin is everything in thought, word and deed that is contrary to the will of God... Geez, that’s from my 7th grade confirmation class. Everything’s driven by the war between good and evil, between God and Satan.”

“Shoot, Brad. That sure sounds like a model to me.”

“Yeh.”

“Think it’s had an impact on the decisions you make?”

“Yeh.”

“But I’ll bet you rarely think in terms of sin and virtue, especially when you’re in the heat of battle.”

“You’re right”

“But, take a moment to think about your last pressure decision. Did you come down on the virtue side of the fence?”

“The McElhinney deal” said Brad. “Lemme think. Yeh, I guess I did. I left a little extra on the table for him, just to smooth the closing.”

“That was good morals, maybe good ethics.”

“No,” said Brad. “It was just good business”.

“Ahhhhh,” said I. “Isn’t it interesting how those things seem to cluster together? Good morals, good ethics, good business?”

Brad didn’t say a word, but you could smell the wheels turning.

I had to ask; “You think the Anderson or Maslow model might have led you to the same decision?”

“I don’t know,” said Brad “Lemme think. The extra profit was certainly an affirmation of his competence, which put him in the mood to close the deal quickly and smoothly. Yeh – that’s your model. And the extra money would certainly affect his self esteem, and it would also allow him to pursue hang gliding or whatever his heart’s desire is ... so yeh, Maslow’s Theory would have told me to do the same thing as well.”

“So would it have mattered which model you used?”

“Wait a minute!” Brad exclaimed, “Did you notice that your model and Maslow’s are almost interchangeable? I mean, your competence stuff is clearly imbedded in at least 4 of Maslow’s levels – probably all 5. I think the same is true of your function and acceptance stuff too.”

“Yeh, now flip things around. You’ll see good and evil imbedded in my model, and Maslow’s stuff as well.”

“Yeh” said Brad. “What’s with that?”

“They’re all headed in the same direction. Human’s all share a sense that there is a moral order to the universe. It shows up in every religion, every philosophy and every scientific school of thought. Even Entropy Theory says that ...”

“I know that one!” interrupted Brad. “That’s the one that says that if you run enough random numbers, even *they* start to take on a predictable pattern.”

“Pretty close.” I said. “And here’s the interesting point, regardless of how different the culture, moral order addresses the same issues to one group of folks that it does to another. They all address fairness, opportunity, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

“So then why do we have different schools of thought about why people do what they do?” asked Brad.

“Nuance. Take a look at fairness. Every single religious, philosophical and political system known to man is in favor of fairness. But how do we know something is fair? For instance - you work 8 hours a day. So do I. You sit in an air-conditioned cubicle. I work out in the fresh air. You are conscientious and careful in your work. So am I. You get paid 60% more than I do. Is that fair?”

“Depends on your benchmark.” Said Brad.

“What benchmarks?” I asked.

“Well, are you looking at this from the standpoint of inputs or outputs?” said Brad. “Or what about relative measures? Things like equality or proportionality.”

“Humph!” I grunted. “You just mapped the 20th century. You built a 2x2 matrix. On one edge you have Equality and Proportionality. On the other you have Inputs and outputs.” I drew the matrix on his white board.

	INPUTS	OUTCOMES
EQUAL	NO ONE	COMMUNISM
PROPORTIONAL	EVERY ONE	CAPITALISM

“Notice something interesting,” I said. “No one, not a single model is built on the assumption of equal inputs from individuals. In fact, everyone, every religion, philosophy and political doctrine acknowledges that some folks produce more value than others – i.e. – proportional inputs. I find that fascinating.”

“Henh” said Brad. He may have been clearing his sinuses rather than agreeing, but I continued anyway.

“And Capitalism and Communism are in large measure simply arguing over the distribution of outcomes. Should we all get the same, regardless of our inputs, or should the more talented folks get proportionately more.”

“And we spent 50 years threatening to blow each other up over that? That’s a tad bit more than fascinating.” said Brad.

“Maybe even ‘Important?’ ” I asked

“Maybe even” he said.

“And here’s the part that stuns the ox” I said. We almost blew up the world over that conceptual nuance.

“Hmmm,” mused Brad. “So this stuff does something more than give us specific behavioral guidelines. But what?”

“You, my friend are one sharp cookie. Yes, it does a lot more. The model we use is important, mostly, because it frames the situation for us. It tells us what is good, what is bad. It tells us what is fair and what is unfair, what is safe and what is dangerous. So we suddenly find ourselves in the heat of battle, we know what to do --- not by figuring it out on the spot, but by gut reactions that are the product of years of viewing the world from one perspective.”

“Like my Uncle Joe” said Brad.

“Who?” I asked

“Uncle Joe. My mom’s brother. He was enormous. And hairy. And loud. Oh God, was he loud. You could hear him bellow a mile away. In fact, he was a lot like the bear you conjured earlier. But every time I saw Uncle Joe, I’d run toward him, full tilt. Not away. Toward.”

“So your model didn’t teach you that big, hairy and loud were dangerous,?” I said.

“A thousand pardons my master,” said Brad reverently

“The model didn’t teach me that big, hairy, loud and human were dangerous. I still had the good sense to run from a bear.”

“Yes you did,” I grinned. “Nuances.”

“Very so,” said Brad with a gentle bow.

We hear a lot today about how crummy the American educational system is, as though the problem comes from the input. The critics may have a point. But I’ve read the textbooks myself. I’ve looked at the assignments. The content is all there. Literally, we lay the secrets of the universe in front of our kids on a daily basis. And the thing I’ve found is that most people are like Brad; the material all starts to roll back out of them, processed and surprisingly intact --- if you give it a green light to come back out and breathe the fresh air.

- Maybe the problem doesn't exist in the system that puts the knowledge into folks.
- Maybe the problem exists in how we get it back out of them as adults.

“Brad, I'd give you a college degree, just based on what you've told me today. You have processed, and retained, all that material you were so eager to condemn as crap earlier today. It was an incredible display.”

Brad was a bit embarrassed by the praise. “Yeh, well, thanks. Who knew?”

“You did, Brad. You did. That's the point. So why did it come out so clearly today?”

“Well in all honesty, you kinda guided me down the primrose path, chief.”

“Yeh. But I wasn't putting words in your mouth.”

“No. But you were asking a lot of leading questions.”

“Yeah. But you were the one with the answers. And, if you recall, you asked some pretty good questions of your own.”

Brad thought a second. “Yeh, but ...”

“Waitwaitwait” I said, “Lean forward.” He did, whereupon I thwacked him on the forehead with my bird finger.

“Ow. What was that for?”

“That's to remind you that you're a lot smarter than you think you are. Stop plugging your brain with your 'but' ”

“My but?”

“Your 'yeh buts'. You've got 'yehbuts' sticking out of every orifice in your head. Stop being your own worst enemy. Give yourself permission to be smart. For some reason, America has

adopted a culture of anti-intellectualism. So much so that half the population goes nuts for any politician that puts on his aw shucks hat and makes a couple of dumb jokes about computer nerds. I worry about us, sometimes. I really do.”

“You sound like a Democrat.”

“No, I sound like an embarrassed Republican.”

“Okay” said Brad. “I just gave myself permission to be smart. So now what?”

“Nothing!” I said, “Because you’ve been smart all along. The only thing that happens when you give yourself the green light is that thinking gets a lot easier, because ...”

“Because I’ve pulled my butt out of my brain.”

“Yeh, something like that.”

“Heh, heh, heh.” Brad just sat there and chuckled for a moment. “This is pretty interesting, Doc.”

“Yeh, it is.”

“It’s like I knew it, and didn’t know it all my life.”

“Yeh”

“And it all happened just ‘cause we took, what’s it been, an hour? To shoot the breeze.”

“I think we’ve shot a little more than the breeze”, I said, “but yeh, it’s been about an hour. Now why do you think you made such strides?”

“Well,” thought Brad, “you’re easy to talk to. You’re safe. You assume I’m pretty bright. At least I think you do. You do, don’t you? What’re grinning about? What?”

“You think I care.”

“Yeh.”

“About what you think?”

“Yeh, I do. Am I wrong?”

“No. You’re absolutely right. I do.”

“Then what?”

“You, my friend, have just discovered the first secret of getting people to do what you want.”

“They have to believe I care about them.

And ?”

“...and ... what they think.”

“Bingo. And you do that by ...”

“...by asking them.”

“... and ...”

“... and then listening to their answer.”

“Listening.” I intoned like a sacred mantra.

“You are such a hambone,” he laughed.

“Yeh,” I admitted, “but it doesn’t change the facts. Folks hate to be invisible. Hate it. With a passion. Which leads to all sorts of bad behavior: sabotaging machines, dogging it at work, or grabbing a gun and going postal. ‘Betcha see me now, don’t cha?’ Visibility is key. Asking them what they think, feel, want --- and then *listening* to their response lets them know they’re visible. And when they know that, their behavior gets good.”

“It can’t be that simple,” said Brad. But his body language said, “make me a believer.”

So I anointed him with the Hawthorne Effect. “Back in the 1930’s, General Electric did an experiment to see how differences in lighting effected productivity in a factory setting. They split their own big factory in Hawthorne Illinois in half. One side got one type of lighting; the other side got a different

type of lighting. Researchers were everywhere, measuring activities, asking workers how they felt, what they thought etc. The results? Productivity went up on *both* sides of the factory.”

“That’s weird,” said Brad.

“Not just weird. Downright spectacular. Further research showed that workers were responding to the fact that someone cared what they thought. GE had accidentally made its own employees visible. And productivity took off like a rocket. That’s the Hawthorne Effect, and it’s been replicated a hundred times.”

Brad was impressed. “That’s a pretty neat trick.”

“Yeh, it is. But if that’s all it is, it does you more harm than good in the long run. Workers will get really pissed.”

“So what am I supposed to do?”

“Well, you could try *really* caring what they think,” said I.

“Look, they need to know they’re visible when you’re making decisions, not just when you walk past them in the morning. Ask them *what* they think. Then ask them *why* they think that. Then *listen* to what they say. And don’t pooh-pooh or dismiss what they say. Otherwise you just make them invisible again.”

“That’s it?” asked Brad.

“Nooooo,” I laughed. “Far from it. There are as many models about why folks do what they do as there are academics looking for research grants and tenure. Everyone’s got a model. You’ve got psychic, relational and functional bank account models. You’ve got Gap Analysis and Cognitive Dissonance models. You’ve got probability, instrumentality and payoff models. Perceptual and enactment models. Nephish and Gnostic models. Attention and valence models. Proactive and reactive, intrinsic and extrinsic, indoor and outdoor models. They’ve even got revelatory models, and my favorite

– the Evolutionary Psychology model. I call it the caveman model, and it’s uncannily useful in making predictions.”

“Geeze” was all he could say.

“Yeh. But here’s the interesting thing. They all have one thing in common. Every single one of them centers around one thing ----- meaning. Turns out that mankind wants to know what it all means. What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of *my* life? What do all these things say about me and my place in the grand scheme of things?

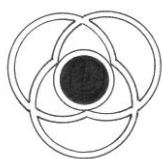
“I don’t know, Doc. This is getting’ pretty touchy-feely.”

I handed him his hat and coat. “Maybe. But I’d suggest you think about it for a while. And when you get a chance, you might want to read Viktor’s book”

“Who the hell is Viktor?” Asked Brad.

“Frankl. Viktor Frankl. The book is titled Man’s Search for Meaning. Give it a try.”

“Yeh, maybe. Thanks Doc.”



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Chapter 3

HELL

*Beware when thou pointest a finger of scorn,
for the other three pointeth back at thee.*

People talk about what's on their mind. Just not the way they think they do. Pay attention to their words and you'll see that they reveal a lot more about themselves than they do about the topic at hand. It's the "3 finger phenomena". Let's take Brad as a case in point.

- What he said was "Why in Hell won't these assholes do what I tell them?"
- But what he might have meant was "I'm in misery (hell) and I feel like an asshole; and I don't know why."

People usually know when they need help, long before they admit it to themselves. So their sub-conscious sends up all sorts of warning flairs. Let's hear it for the sub-conscious. When you learn to listen to it, life gets pretty interesting. The most important thing that Brad said was the word "Hell". People tend to use that word when they feel helpless. In all likelihood, that's a serious cry for help.

Hell

Hell is a desperate place, full of anguished souls. They weep. They gnash their teeth. They cry aloud and heave themselves against the gates and walls. They bleed tears and cry blood. Hell is the stuff of nightmares and honest fears, and folklore out the ying yang. But Hell is very real, isn't it? We know that to be the case, since we've all been there. It is a place of hopelessness, despair, and claustrophobic panic. It is the place of ultimate suffering, and we have all visited it at least once.

The sad thing is that some of us choose to live there permanently. Those are the one's who have chosen to die, long before their bodies have the good sense to lie down. Brad was one of those people. He was just waiting to lay down. You see, Hell hath another name in our century. We call it the stress/anxiety syndrome.

Stress: Hell by another name

Stress will kill you. Honest to god, it will get you every single time. It will kill you sure as shootin', but first it will twist your guts into a knot, rob you of sleep and ruin every aspect of your life, and the lives of those around you. Then, one day, the stress will move up a notch and take you directly into anxiety. At that point you're almost home. The heart races, the vision blurs, the breathing becomes not just rapid and shallow, it becomes staccato. And eventually, the blood vessel bursts. It always does. If it's in your head, you get the stroke. If it's in your chest, you get the heart attack. Either way, the anxiety ceases immediately. So does the stress. So does the life.

Getting out of Hell

There are only two ways to get out of this Hell. Dying is the first way. That's why suicide is so popular. It works. The pain stops. The Catholic Church has missed the boat on this one for two thousand years. They've been saying that you go straight to hell for all eternity if you commit suicide.

Anyone suffering from stress/anxiety syndrome knows that they're already in Hell and that suicide would be their ticket out. Of course, there's the fact that you're dead, so the long-term ramifications of this course of action aren't so good.

The second way to get out of Hell is – buy a gun. Shoot somebody. Anybody. Honest to god, you will feel so much better right afterwards. Going postal is very rational. You know why? Because stress is the result of feeling helpless. And nothing cures helplessness like staring down a gun barrel

at someone else. You ain't helpless any more, Bub. Up until they throw you in the slammer and you spend the rest of your life being completely helpless, and hopeless to boot. So the long-term ramifications of plan B aren't much better than those of Plan A.

Notice something about both Plan A and Plan B, though. Both of them work real well, in the short run. They just create an even bigger problem in the long run.

Notice something else. They have something in common. They both do something. Action is the answer. You just have to find a little smarter action to take, that's all. And to do that, you need to understand stress a bit better. So in order to get out of Hell, you have to get into it a little deeper.

Getting into Hell

Let's start by grabbing the bull by the horns. Hell is self-imposed. We made it up.

You heard me right. We made it up. It may be the single biggest tenet of the Christian faith, and therefore of western civilization, and yet The Bible, itself, is effectively mum on the subject. There is no central, cohesive section of scripture that describes, discusses or explains in depth the existence and function of Hell. That's a bit odd don't you think, since the fear of Hell is the very thing that compels folks to cling to their faith in Christianity?

Instead, the few Biblical mentions of Hell are peripheral asides, as though the writers are tapping into current folklore to illustrate a point. In fact, the word "hell", or its various synonyms, is used only 98 times in the entire Bible. That's 98 out of the millions of words in scripture. Miniscule. And of those 98 mentions, only 3 of them refer to a specific place of future suffering and penalty. The rest of the mentions are simply references to the grave or to the state of being dead.

Wow. We made it up. Well, you and I didn't. But we, collectively (mankind) made it up. Actually, the clergy did that, over the course of hundreds of years. Then Dante made it the setting for the Inferno section of his Divine Comedy and John Milton popularized it in his book, Paradise Lost. *That's* where our theology of Hell came from, not from The Bible.

So we made it up. Tell you something else. We're also the ones who condemn ourselves to it.

Getting back out of Hell

Here's the ultimate irony, we can chose to step out of Hell any time we want. All we have to do is stop being helpless, or confused or isolated. If we do something, anything, that changes just one little corner of the world we inhabit, we are no longer helpless. We may never get our former life back, but we are no longer helpless.

Let me explain how this works. The first time I visited Frank, my very first client, for a coaching session, I found him rocking back and forth in his chair, tear-stained shirt, vacant stare, singsong quality to his voice. He was at the edge. His wife had taken the kids and moved out of the house the night before – with all the furniture, to boot. His business was tanking, his marriage was dead, his family gone, his life in complete disarray.

When you are sitting on the bottom of the pit of despair you know how to define helplessness. It goes beyond pain, to complete and utter hollowness. Suicide looks like sweet comfort at a moment like that.

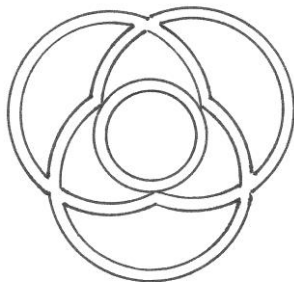
I hauled Frank home. We found an old rollaway bed in the garage and set it up in the master bedroom. And we made the bed. Then we un-made it and I had Frank remake it himself. His assignment for the next week was to make his bed every

day. And then he had to study it for 2 minutes, every day, and tell himself that one little corner of his world was now under control. The next week we added brushing his teeth and shining his shoes – everyday. Then noting that the things he controlled had multiplied. The next week we added shampooing and ironing his shirt – everyday etc. etc until he worked his way back to believing that he could have an impact on his own world once again. Then life was worth trying once again, and he re-entered the world.

He never got his wife back. But he found a better one. His business took off like gangbusters, he sold it for far more than it was worth, and pursued a second career in theater, which was actually his first love. We lost touch of each other for 4-5 years, then he called me out of the blue last month and we had lunch. He showed me a picture of his bed, now an overly ornate king-sized 4-poster. “I still make it myself – every single day. I just wanted you to know.” That was it. He’d learned how to stay out of Hell. And every day out of Hell is a good day.

I need a model

If you need a model, think of it this way. Hell has three circles. Picture 3 wells with low brick walls. Now picture each one of them as a whirlpool, with just enough suction to pull you under if you were asleep. You can wriggle out on your own if you’re only caught in one of them. But if your toe is trapped in two or more of the circles, you’ll need some help.



The first circle is Helplessness. It comes from being overwhelmed. You have a sling shot and the opponent has tanks. It doesn't matter how brave or cunning you are, you are going to die, and die ignominiously. The result is Despair. The only way out is to get and use the metaphorical gun. That's what the roadside bomb is. It's the "gun" that can knock off a tank. Do that 2 or 3 times and you'll grow a new crop of heroes pretty quickly. Blowing up one little tank, making your bed every day. Ultimately, they accomplish the same thing --- they both give you hope that tomorrow will be better than today, because you are no longer helpless.

The second circle of Hell is Uncertainty. Take a stadium full of well-educated, white collar Americans, on a moonless night. Now turn off the lights. The beast within them will come out within 17 seconds. Terror, trampling, the works. Absolutely nothing changed, except for one thing. The dark brings uncertainty. For all I know the person next to me could have grown fangs in that 17 seconds. I just don't know. So I get an adrenalin rush, in anticipation of fight or flight. And once the adrenalin kicks in, I have the trembles so bad that if I don't hit someone or run away, I will explode. The same thing happened in the US in the fall of 2008. Someone turned out the lights in our economy. First it was the mortgage market. Then the banking industry. Then consumer credit. The housing market dried up and sales of boats and RVs went to zero. The country literally didn't know what to expect the next day. We couldn't see around the corner. Uncertainty was rampant, and the populace had an adrenalin rush that was so severe that we elected an inexperienced black man to the presidency. Not because he was black. But because he said "I have a flash light, and if you calmly take the hand of the person in front of and behind you, we can find the exit and all get home safely."

Confusion is what keeps us trapped in the second circle of Hell. The ability to see 2 feet in front of you is what gets you out. So learn what lies ahead, or create what lies directly ahead, or

simply make it up. It's not the answer itself that matters. It's that someone has an approach to getting out. It gives us just enough hope to quell the adrenalin beast and stuff it back into its bottle.

The third circle of Hell is isolation. We can get through just about any trauma if we have a buddy; someone to talk to, grieve with, and laugh at. But in Hell you have no sounding board. No one to validate your experience, affirm your actions or inspire you to live another day. That's why solitary confinement is so effective. It creates a panic – a silent scream. An endless adrenalin bath, that makes the victim claustrophobic in their own skin. It's why a simple cuddle keeps a baby alive. It's why laying on of hands cures. It's why massage, acupuncture, and even the humble pedicure lift the spirits. Making contact with another human provides the hope that comes from knowing that one more inhabitant of Hell had the strength to survive yet one more day. That's what the head thwack was about with Brad. It was a caress, to calm him in the midst of an emotional rollercoaster ride.

The three circles of Hell teach us two simple things.

- 1st – Hell is the act of drowning in one's own adrenalin
- 2nd – Hope is the thing that turns down the adrenalin

Combinations

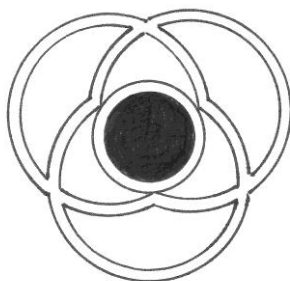
If you're in any two of the circles at the same time, you're in misery.

- ❖ Uncertainty and helplessness = misery
- ❖ Uncertainty and isolation = misery
- ❖ Helplessness and isolation = misery

Your ability to get on top of things is impaired and your willingness to try decreases over time. Most of the stress, anxiety and depression suffered in this world are a result of combinations. And they share a common level of agitation. It is miserable getting caught in a combination. But it is possible

to get out, because you're not in the third circle as well. So you've got one foot on dry land and can lift yourself, or be lifted, out.

Education, training and support groups exist for a reason. They keep you from drowning in hell. Same thing with research, strategic and tactical plans and Facebook. They address uncertainty, isolation and helplessness. That's also why churches, political parties and unions exist. Each of them addresses one, or more, of the circles of hell. And those are absolutely crucial because they just might be the one thing that keeps you out of the 4th circle. And believe me, you want to stay out of the 4th circle, because the 4th circle is pure hell. Here's why.



The 4th Circle of Hell –The pit of endless despair

The 4th circle is what gets you. It is the intersection of the other three. If you're suffering extreme uncertainty, can't do anything about it and have no one to talk to about it – the stress shifts to anxiety and the anxiety to utter despair. And that, my friend, is pure hell. It is the depth of hollow horror. The silent scream. The ranting gives way to breathless mouthing and the slack jawed trudging of a dead man walking. It is the absence of all hope or reason. It is madness and death.

If you spend much time in the 4th circle, your life - what little you have left - isn't worth living.

Now, what about your Assholes?

Are they in Hell too? Or is it just you? Do you think that maybe they have a sense of helplessness? How grateful do you think they'd be to someone who reduced the grip of just one of the circles of Hell? Why do you think that unions are attractive to employees?

Can you even imagine what they'd do for the guy who relieves all three? What would **you** be willing to do for that guy?

Be that Guy

Bring hope into the lives of your folks. Teach them to make their bed, every day. Then brush their teeth, iron their shirt etc. etc. Then help them get, and use, their metaphorical gun. Give them some education. Give them a tool. Teach them something they can do, no matter how small. You teach someone not to be helpless and you're halfway home.

Be the flashlight in their dark stadium. Tell them what is two feet ahead or just around the corner. Better still, feed them carrots and help them find their own way in the dark. You give someone a way to cope with uncertainty, and you will have their undying loyalty.

Take the time to listen to your folks. Just listen. Then touch their shoulder, their elbow, or simply shake their hand. People love their sounding board. Be the board. The simple warmth of your presence will give many of them the courage to step over the fence and out of Hell.

If you have been to Hell, even for just half a day, you will understand a very simple rule of life. People will sell their soul to stay out of Hell. That is the core of every religion, and it is the one great truth that underlies leadership.

Getting out of hell

Here's a hard truth to chew on. You will never eliminate helplessness, uncertainty or isolation. Can't be done. The ones who try, earn a posthumous title – martyr to stupidity. So stop trying to do the impossible. Instead, focus on the do-able.

Re-define Isolation – Move from personal isolation to group isolation. A group in isolation has a name. We call it a team. So get folks to buddy up. Put them in work groups. Encourage them to take coffee breaks and lunches together. Give them little trivia questionnaires about each other and give them a free donut if they fill it out together. Give them a uniform, even if it's something as trivial as a t-shirt, or a hat or a 50-cent lapel pin. Any old thing will work. Then poof! They suddenly have an identity, and they are no longer all alone. Then you can become the uber-mensch. You talk about us and we. You talk about them and they and those guys. And those guys are never as sweet as us guys. You don't have to use "The Great Satan" but you get the idea. It's us against the world, fellas. And we ain't alone, 'cause we got each other.

Focus the uncertainty – Don't let the uncertainty be about whether we'll survive, but about exactly how comfortable we will be after this crisis is over. It's not about whether we will win, but by how much. If you don't tell people what to worry about, they will make up their own targets of despair, and theirs will always be insurmountable ones. So get them focused on whether it's better to put square hospital corners in the linens when making a bed. Otherwise they wet their pants in terror over the demon that must certainly be hiding under the bed. So turn on the light – even if it's just a flash light or measly little candle. Show them there's nothing under the bed. Show them where the door is. Help them memorize how to get from the bed to the door in the dark. In other words, communicate – communicate – communicate. The higher the level of uncertainty, the more you need to communicate. Tell them

where we are, where we're going and how we're gonna get there. Then tell them again. And again. And again.

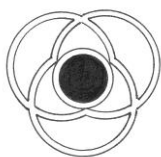
Attack the helplessness – We already gave the initial solution to this one. Get people to take action. Make a bed, brush their teeth, pick up the phone, make a sales call, show up to work. Action puts a chink in helplessness, and that breeds hope, and hope diminishes stress to a manageable level. Then you can shift the stress from bad stress to good stress. Good stress comes from a difficult task that you have a 50% chance of mastering. Bad stress sets in when the probability of mastery sinks below 25%. So, teach them a skill, practice with them. Drill them, time them, reward them and/or yell at them. But always let them know that you believe in them. When you do that, you've moved the situation from being one of Risk to being one of Challenge. And everyone loves a challenge.

So, what about Brad?

Some things in life are too privy to share. The conversations between Brad and I on this topic are one of those things. Descending into the 4th circle of hell with a man is an ugly thing, full of fear and loathing. Every demon from the past resurfaces. Every fear and sense of inadequacy papers the walls. A man is not at his best when he is in pure hell. And neither is his guide. No purpose is served, therefore - other than the voyeur's need – by recounting the scene or dialog. Suffice it to say that we discovered that Brad was seriously at risk. We also found that he was brilliant. He'd been getting himself into and out of the 4th circle on a regular basis. He could reason his way out of the Pit of Despair and return to full function and surprisingly jovial demeanor, but, he was apt to slip back into it on the smallest provocation. I can't institutionalize someone like that. I cannot force them to avoid the inevitable stroke or heart attack. So I have a choice. I can wash my hands of the person and march off in self-righteous dismissal of them as someone unwilling to get well. Or, I can change the rules of the relationship and after full disclosure and

waiver, stick by their side as a friend. I don't have much respect for the prissy little boundary setting shrinks, whose biggest concern is their ability to say "Not my fault." So I continued on, knowing full well that there would, most likely, be an unhappy ending.

And the unhappy ending would not be that Brad might die. We all die, even the cheerful ones. The unhappy ending would be that he might not have learned how to live.



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Chapter 4

WON'T

“I understand you told them about my time in Hell.”

“No. In fact I made a point NOT to tell them about your visit.”

“ ‘Visit’. I stand corrected. Why ‘Visit’?”

“Because you’ll be back. Here ... sit down.”

“I don’t want to go back.”

“Doesn’t matter. That is your nature. Have a seat.”

“Crap”

“Yeh.”

“Crap.”

“Are you stuttering, or did you just run out of vocabulary?”

“Fuck you. You’ve just pronounced my death sentence.”

I reached out and cupped his elbow. “C’mon. Sit down, Brad.

I’m not pronouncing a thing. I’m just citing statistics. You

carry enough stress to fell a horse.”

The bulk of Chapter 4 has been omitted from this Examination Copy

It Covers

- The difference between “don’t” and “won’t”
- Every new task IS rocket science
- Give them the Why (Purpose, context, place)
- Take time to teach them (again & again)
- Make it clear. Make it vertical. Rinse & repeat.
- Then give them permission to take a risk
- Their payoff: Certainty, Safety & Community
- The incredible power of being the boss



Chapter 5

ASSHOLES

Becky called two days before my next meeting with Brad. “What did you do to him?” She asked. “He came home muttering – ‘everybody’s an asshole on Thursday... on Thursday ... everybody ... but, but, but ...’”.

“But, what?” I asked.

“Me too” said Becky. “I got in his face and said ‘but, but, but what, Brad?’ He stared at me blankly for a second then broke into a big grin. ‘But some of us are assholes all week long,’ he laughed. ‘All week ... But most of us aren’t’. He hugged me. ‘Most of us aren’t. I’ve been missing that point.’”

“Sounds like an epiphany to me.” I said.

“More like an epiphany and jelly sandwich,” she retorted. “Is he losing it?”

“Sounds more like he’s finding it, if you ask me. We’ve been working through some pretty heavy stuff. Other than the muttering, how has he been?”

“Scary. You know him. Tighter than a drum; like a coiled spring. Not this week. It’s like the guy who courted me moved back in. Sweet, helpful, attentive. What the hell is going on?”

“Becky, you’re a good wife. And I appreciate your concern, but I have to honor the sanctity of confidentiality.”

“Not anymore Doc, ‘cause he just incorporated me into his therapy this week.”

“Oh, how so?”

“I became his ‘Study Buddy’. Did you make this assignment?”

“No, I didn’t. What assignment?” Brad had just thrown me a curve ball.

“We spend 55 minutes every night, in intense conversation. No more. No less. In fact, he often ends them by standing and thanking me for coming. It’s weird, but exciting too.”

“How so?” I asked.

“We’ve spent the week talking about assholes.”

“Hah” I blurted.

“No, seriously. It’s been a symposium on the nature of assholedness and what causes people to act thusly. But wait. The most interesting part is that we’ve also focused on what causes us to see people as assholes.”

“And what did you come up with?” I asked.

“Are you at your computer?” she replied.

“Yeh”.

“I sent you something before I called. See it?”

“Yeh. I opened the pdf file she’d attached. ... It’s a handwritten note from Brad. ‘She’s in the loop.’ He says.”

“Well?”

“OK. You’re in. To a point. What else have you got?”

“I’m sending it now. We wrote a paper together. 17 pages. I haven’t done that since college. It was actually kinda fun.”

I was impressed. “Terrific. Gimme the Cliff Note version.”

“Okay. Here it is,” she said. There are three ways to identify an asshole.

1. His actions

2. His motives
3. His tactics”

“OK,” I said. “A little more meat please.”

She giggled, “An asshole’s actions are destructive --- of individuals, relationships, groups or goals.”

“OK, what about the motives?”

“This one was interesting,” she said. “It’s not so much that they’re despicable. But they are always self-centered. An asshole does constant gap analysis, and every action is centered on making sure that he, or she, comes out ahead.

“What about the Tactics?”

“They’re despicable. Kneecapping, backstabbing, heaving people under the bus. And always in public. Assholes work out in the open, not in the shadows. At least when they’re trying to diminish the other party. The opposite is true when they’re trying to build themselves up, though. Then everything is sneaky-sneaky. They’re the classic, gold-bricks, gold diggers, cheaters, liars and credit grabbers.”

“That’s good work. What was your biggest surprise?”

“The practical joke. It is the asshole’s favorite weapon. Makes the victim look like a fool, and raises the jokester in other’s eyes, because they determine who gets laughed at. And nobody wants to be next. We discovered that practical jokes are actually a form of intimidation, aimed at the audience, not the victim. I never knew that. Heck, I’ve pulled off my fair share of practical jokes in my day.”

“Yeh. I remember some of them. Do they still seem funny now?”

“Some, yeh, like the mayonnaise in Melanie’s bathing suit,” she chuckled, “but most of them, no. They mostly embarrass me now. I hurt people.”

“So you were an asshole every Thursday. What about the rest of the week?”

“We asked each other the same question,” said Becky.

“And we actually took an extended walk down memory lane. No, the rest of the week, every week, we’ve been consistently nice guys. That was reassuring. Anyway, that’s the paper in a nutshell.”

“Anything else?” I asked.

“Yeh. I discovered a few things I didn’t share with Brad.”

“Such as?”

“Such as the meaning of the sexual imagery in all this. Do you know that 92% of people refer to being cheated as getting screwed?”

I shrugged, “Didn’t know the exact number, but I’m not surprised.”

“I am. I thought getting screwed was supposed to be something positive. Isn’t that what men spend their entire adult lives trying to get? I mean really, you’d think they’d speak about it with a bit more reverence.”

“Ah, Becky. You miss the point. Screwing *is* very positive to men. *Getting* screwed isn’t. It’s a question of whether you’re the do-er or the do-ee. As a general rule, guys don’t like being on the receiving end. If I am, somebody cheated --- hence, I got screwed.”

“Ahhh. I see. So explain this; 83% of people refer to the cheater as an asshole. ‘Dick’ and ‘jerk’ make up the remaining 17%. Why asshole?”

“Get graphic, Becky. If a guy is going to get screwed, where is that going to occur?”

A momentary pause, then, “Ohhh. I get the connection – but isn’t the usage reversed. Shouldn’t the victim be referred to as the asshole? I mean, really?”

I chuckled to cover the fact I was blushing. “That’s one of the vagaries of human nature. A strange little glitch in human nature. The name game. One kid says, ‘You’re an asshole.’ So the other one fires back, ‘No! *You’re* the asshole.’”

“Bear with me here,” continued Becky. “The greatest indignity in life is not rape. It’s anal rape. Regardless of whether you’re male or female, anal rape is the ultimate humiliation.”

“Yep. It is the top of the heap when it comes to dominance games.”

“So when Brad refers to folks as assholes, he’s sending up a red flare, isn’t he?”

“Yep. He’s announcing that he’s firmly in the 1st circle of hell. He’s helpless and humiliated.”

“Yeh. I’m scared Doc. I think he’s heading for a heart attack. Or stroke. His color’s not good – kinda splotchy. And when he goes on a rampage...”

“Yeh, his eye bleeds. Have you taken him to the doctor?”

“Every specialist in town. They all give him a clean bill of health. The man has Zen-like qualities, though. I’ll bet his normal blood pressure is over 200 and probably tops 300 when he has one of his temper fits. But when he’s at the doctor’s --- it’s consistently 120/80. Anyway, I’ve got an appointment at the Mayo Clinic in 3 weeks.”

“Good. In the meantime, give him an aspirin a day, and we’ll continue whittling away at the source of his temper fits. We’re actually making good progress. I think every business owner goes through this kind of stress. Brad’s is just different as a matter of degree. I’ll keep you posted. Bye.”

* * * * *

Brad walked in chuckling. “How’d you like my little pit bull? I figured I’d sic Becky on you. She’d keep you on your toes.”

“She’s very impressive. You guys did a lot of work. Where did that come from?”

“I just thought I’d get a jump on things. I knew our topic today would be assholes.”

“How?”

“It’s the next word in my mantra. ‘Why in hell won’t these assholes ...’ Just thought I’d get a head start. So now I know what an asshole is. And I also know that most of my folks are NOT assholes. At least not most of the time. So what’s next? The word ‘DO’?”

“Not quite so fast. Why do you think you’ve always been so quick to assume your employees were assholes?”

“Shorthand,” said Brad. “I don’t have a lot of spare time. I look at actions and infer motivation. Then I act on the inferred motivation. It saves a lot of time. Yeh, yehyeh. I know what you’re gonna say next.”

“You do?”

“Yeh. You’re gonna pull a Dr. Phil moment --- ‘How’s that workin’ for ya, Brad?’”

“And?”

“It sucks. Turns out I don’t give a rip about why people do what they do. We already covered that in our first session, didn’t we?”

“Yep”

Different Animals

“Your comment about owners being different animals than employees got me thinking,” said Brad. “Maybe their motivations for doing stuff are different than mine would be in the same circumstance. Maybe they’re not gold bricking. Maybe they’re scared to take a risk. I never stopped to think of it before, but I just might scare the crap out of my employees.”

“All over the floor, Brad. You’re rich, successful, good looking, 6’2” and you have one hell of a temper. And you have the vocabulary of a longshoreman. I imagine you scare just about everybody that works for you.”

“That was never my intent,” he shot back.

“Braaaaad,” I said. “That is always the intent. Fear prevents confrontation. If you keep everyone a tad bit fearful, they’re a whole lot less likely to give you pushback on anything you say.”

“You ... I ... oh, fuck me.” He sat in silence for a moment. ... “I’m such a shit.”

“No, you’re not a shit. You’re just trying to get through the day, and you found a tool that works. But not perfectly. And right now you’re on the verge of finding a better tool. And that is always unsettling. Take a break. Breathe.”

We sat in silence for a minute or two. A very long time.

“Okay,” he started, “how do I change this around?”

By this point both of us were sitting on the edge of our seats, elbows on knees, foreheads almost touching. The conversation was in a near whisper, “Go back to what we were talking about last week about being a different animal than your subordinates.” I said. “Let’s walk through your assumptions about yourself. Are you smart?”

“No. Clever, maybe, but not particularly smart.”

“Tell me about clever.” I said.

“Clever. You know, um, I can figure out how to solve problems that stump other folks.”

“OK. And what’s your assumption about the folks that work for you?”

“They could do the same thing, if they tried hard enough.”

“Oh? Why is that?”

“Geez, Doc, do I need to spell it out for you?” He stood abruptly and began to pace. “They could do it if they wanted to because they’re every bit as smart as I am.”

“But you’re not smart. You said so yourself.”

“Ok. Not smart. Try clever, then. They’re every bit as clever as I am.”

“Are not.”

“What?”

“They aren’t. By definition, you’re more clever than they are. You just told me that. You’re clever because you can figure things out that nobody else can. That eliminates everyone who works for you. They couldn’t figure those things out. You could. Ergo ---- ”

“Yeh, well...”

“So what kind of a boss gets mad at his employees for not being able to do something that he knows they can’t do --- figure things out? “And what kind of a boss puts unrealistic expectations on his employees because he’s unwilling to accept his own special gifts?”

“An asshole?”

I let that hang in the air for a while. “Brad, why don’t you come back over here and sit?”

“Fuck me” he grunted as he slid dejectedly into his chair.

“Just fuck me.”

“I have met the enemy...” I intoned,
and Brad finished, “Yeh, and he is I. I know, I know.”

More silence.

“The actual term is ‘uber-asshole.’” I said. “Literally going above and beyond the actions of a normal asshole. When you own the business you’re in position to be an uber-asshole.”

“But I never embarrass or humiliate one employee in front of another. Never do practical jokes. Never belittle, berate, knee cap, or heave them under the bus.”

“Stop, Brad. I’m going to tell you something very difficult to hear. You behave like a textbook uber-asshole. Not individually. In fact, at that level you’re a downright nice guy. But at the collective level, oh my god. You humiliate, degrade and diminish your people every damn day. Every day, Brad. You just do it to them as a group, not as individuals. You sit here in this office every week and essentially repeat your sacred mantra – ‘why the hell won’t those assholes do what I tell them to do?’ As though they are stupid or evil, or both. Week in. Week out. Does it ever occur to you that two of your folks go to church with me? In fact we serve on the church board together. Another of them is my son’s scoutmaster. Another is working on a doctorate in neuro-linguistics, and one of them is dating my daughter?”

He was crest-fallen. “I didn’t know. I’m so ...”

“Brad, every company has two employees on a church board, one in scouting, one working on an advanced degree and one dating someone else’s daughter. And a whole lot more, to boot. How can you be so dismissive? They are plugging along, most of them doing the best they can. They simply don’t have your special gifts, and they certainly don’t feel safe enough to take any risks whatsoever, because they know how you feel about them.”

“I have to go,” said Brad.

“Not quite yet, Brad. What you’ve done is a bad thing. But you are a good man.”

“Oh come on.” He said.

“No. I mean it.” I said. “A complete asshole would never get this far. They never acknowledge responsibility. They never accept criticism. They never engage in introspection. Three minutes ago I was telling you things no man wants to hear, and that no asshole would tolerate. You have not taken a swing at me, verbally or physically. You have not pulled a gun or thrown a lamp. Those are all marks of true goodness. So your goodness is not the issue. Your choices are. You’re at one of those decision points now. Simple question. Do you want to lead your life a different way?”

“Would that I could,” said Brad. “You got another trick in your magic bag?”

“No magic. But a couple of suggestions that might help. The first one comes from Adam Smith, the father of capitalism.”

“Back in the 1700s?” asked Brad. “This could be good. What did Adam say?”

I tapped the table for emphasis “Look beyond your peasants.”

“That’s it?” asked Brad. “What the hell does that mean?”

“The king of England and the King of France had been in a pissing match for a good 200 years. Their relative opulence was a measure of their wealth and therefore told them both who the winner was.

The King of England, however, took his eye off the ball in the mid 1200s because he didn’t think he could keep up. Instead of comparing his wealth to the wealth of the king of France he started measuring himself against his own peasants. So anytime one of them got close, the king would confiscate the

poor schlep's property, cattle and kids. It kept the peasants at bay, but he fell further and further behind the king of France.

Smith came in and said get your eye back on the prize. Look beyond your peasants. Look at King Louis, over in France. And stop confiscating property from your peasants. Instead, help them all get prosperous and just take a reasonable skim of their income. Do that and you'll bury France with your wealth.

The King of England paid attention. His wealth grew by leaps and bounds, and when the king turned into Queen Victoria, the Empire reached its zenith. God save the queen."

By this time Brad's eyes were rolling. "What the hell does this have to do with me?"

I leaned toward him. "You spend the bulk of your time and energy obsessing about how your employees are screwing you. Stop fearing your own employees. Instead help them get prosperous. As they do, your cut of the pie will swamp out your competitors. Look beyond your peasants."

"I ... You ... you may have a point there." He grinned and leaned back. "What else you got?"

"Be a happy divorcee."

"Be a happy divorcee..." he mulled a second. "Okay, I'll bite. What's that mean?"

"Do you know what supports the legal profession in America?" I asked. "It's hatred. Blind, gut wrenching hatred, and the accompanying need to cut a pound of flesh off the other party. And you know what fuels hatred? Being trapped in a bad situation. If you could just walk away when a disagreement surfaced, things would be fine.

"It's trying to make a bad relationship work that drives us nuts. So walk away. Only do what comes easy --- and that includes relationships. So hire slow and fire quick. Don't make

excuses for new employees. Make your judgments before their probationary period ends.

“Okay. I’ll grant you that one as well. But that doesn’t help me much right at the moment. Most of my employees have been with me at least 3 years. And the ones causing the most problems are the one’s who’ve been there over five. What do I do with those assholes?”

“Did I ever tell you about the Transactional Web, Brad?”

“Nope.”

“Would you like to hear about it?”

He checked his watch. “Yeh, sure. Tell me about the Web.”

I get prickly heat anytime someone is dismissive of me. So I took a moment to tear Brad a new one of those things we were talking about today. That’s the great thing about counseling. You gain so many tools for destroying the client if and when you wish to. This was just a shot across the bow, though. No real damage was done.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “Yeh, I need to hear this.”

“Yeh, you do. The web is made up of all the various issues on which we interact with a person, over all the time periods that we interact. Let’s say I supervise Charlie on a daily basis. And we also serve on a quality control council together. That’s two issues, and numerous time frames. Right?”

“Yeh. It’s like a box and arrow flow chart. I got it.”

“Ok. Two things you can do. Spend more time with Charlie on each interaction on both of the issues. Find out about his family. Keep notes. Talk about that during each interaction. Congrats! You just created a third issue for the two of you. Try putting him on a planning committee with you as well. Now you’ve got 4 issues.”

“Why would I do that? Charlie’s an asshole.”

“Then fire him!” I snapped.

“I can’t. He’s not that much of an asshole,” smiled Brad.

“Well then ... you need to increase the number of issues between you two,” I said.

“Why?” asked Brad.

“The law of inverses”

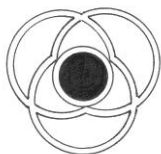
“The what?” he asked.

“The Law of inverses. The more complex your relationship with Charlie becomes, the less likely each of you will be an asshole to the other. The Law of Inverses.”

He opened his mouth to retort but nothing came out.

Instead, his eyes rolled up to the right. “You’re right,” he said. It worked that way for Mark Henry and me back in 2nd grade. Huh. I haven’t thought of Mark in 40 years. Hmm.”

We were a minute over our allotted time. Without being asked, he stood and slowly walked out the door, closing it quietly behind him.



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Chapter 6

DO

Brad walked in a bit sheepishly. “I left abruptly last week. Sorry. That was rough.”

“Yeh.”

“But I made a decision. Knew it before I left. Actually I made it a long time ago. Of course I want to do things differently. That’s why I submit myself to these little torturing sessions. Tutoring sessions. I’m sorry. Small difference.” He grinned a little.

“I know. It just takes a lot of work to admit things to ourselves openly, doesn’t it?”

“Yeh, well at least we know I’m thinking about this stuff. What’s next?”

“Ah, what’s next? Today is action verb day. We’re gonna talk about “DO”. What exactly do you want from your folks, Brad?”

“I want them to do what I tell them to do.”

Chapter 6 has been omitted from this Examination Copy

It Covers:

- Moving from obedience to initiative
- Safety: Be the Catcher in the Rye
- Permission and reward
- Alignment: being a tyrant at the macro level
- Be the goose of loose at the micro level
- Room to roam: rules vs boundaries
- What vs How



Chapter 7

LOVE IS A VERB

Brad rolled into my office in what can only be called an ebullient mood - like somebody had just shaken a bottle of coke and was spraying the room. “Honest to God Doc, it is the greatest thing since sliced bread. Becky turned me on to it. It ‘s so easy it feels like a gimmick. You know this. I know you know. I didn’t know it, though. And you knew that. Well, or course you did. How did you know that I didn’t know? Did you know? You did, didn’t you? Probably so. Looking back, it’s obvious I didn’t know. You know what I mean?” He stood there grinning like a Cheshire cat, panting. “You know?”

I laughed. “Sorry, Brad. I’m not very facile with Babble. Could you translate for me? Use small words and take a breath now and then. What is it that Becky and I know but you didn’t know until this past week?”

He pulled his chair closer to mine and sat so that our knees were almost touching. “The secret of the universe. The four words that change everything; ‘Love is a verb.’” Again with the grin.

I pushed my chair back and stood up. “OK. Pull your chair to where mine was” I said. He did so. Then I moved my chair to where his used to sit. “Nonono no,” I commanded. “Don’t turn around. We’re going to try an experiment. I’m gonna sit back here and stare at the back of your head. You just sit there with your eyes closed while we have the following conversation.”

“This is very weird, Doc.”

“Yeh. Well so are you at the moment.” He chortled at this, but I continued, “Right now your brain is having an electric storm. You’re so excited that every synapse is firing at once. I’m surprised you’re able to talk and walk at the same time.”

“God, you’re right. It’s like a bottle of champagne up there, just fizzing away.”

“OK. So let’s reel it back in a bit so we can walk our way through this. Let’s start with 30 seconds of silence. Close your eyes. Inhale slow, exhale to the count of 7. Good, just keep repeating that. Good.”

I will confess that I was pulling stuff out of my jockey shorts on this. I just needed to get him out of my face and space, and this rigmarole was the only ego-protective idea I had on the spur of the moment. “OK.” I continued. “Keep your eyes closed. Now go back to ‘Love is a verb.’ Tell me what that means.”

“That means it ain’t a state of being.” I couldn’t tell whether he had his eyes closed or not, but he was talking with his hands and shoulders, so I assumed he did. “A state of being is static. Internal, Quiet. Dry. A verb is interactive. I do something to something, or someone ... and since every action has an equal and opposite reaction, I’ll get something back in return. You see?”

“Not quite” I said. “Tell me a bit more.”

“Look. Love is not what we feel. It’s what we do.” He heard my prep breath. “Not yet. Let me finish. I’m not denying that we feel something inside when we love. I’m saying that our feelings are a by-product of love; they’re not the love itself. You see?”

“OK. So where does this insight take you?”

“Are you really this dense,” he asked, “or are you just playing the fool to make a point?”

“Let’s assume I’m just playing the fool,” I said. “Humor me.”
“OK” he sighed and settled deeper into his chair. “Where does this take us? OK. I’ve been assuming that my folks were out to screw me. That presupposes a negative attitude on their part, which we can assume grew out of negative feelings about me. It’s like the great looking babe in school who won’t give you the time of day. In fact, she disses you whenever you try to make a move.”

“Disses?”

“Yeh. ‘Diss’. Dismisses. She dismisses you whenever you make a move.”

“Ahhhh”

“OK. It’s like that. So how do you change that?”

“Send her flowers. Buy her jewelry. Write her love songs. Rent a billboard.”

“Geeze Doc. How’d you ever get laid? One of those might be a good icebreaker. But it takes more than that. You’ve got to ... well ... you’ve got to buy her chairs.”

“What???” He had me with this one. “What the heck does that mean? Buy her chairs.”

“It’s from an old John Travolta movie. He’s got a crush on this woman who hand makes these really ugly and uncomfortable chairs out of tree limbs. She won’t give him the time of day. So he offers to sell her chairs out of his gas station. The chairs start to move. She makes a little money. And their relationship takes off from there. Turns out no one ever bought her chairs. John would just store them in his barn one at a time and give her money for each one he stashed. He loved her by buying her chairs, even though they were ugly and uncomfortable. That’s how you change folks’ feelings. You buy their chairs. Love is a verb.”

“Brad. That’s brilliant! No. Don’t turn around. That is actually a great tactic for courting a woman. But getting into a girl’s pants is a far cry from managing the motivations of your factory personnel.”

“Not as far as you think,” he chuckled. “Look. Love is a verb. It’s a verb. Think about that. What do you do when you’re in love? It’s a finite set. Not hard. When you’re in love:

- “You always have time for her. You turn off your phone, TV or video game. Turn your back on your computer, and never – ever – continue working while she’s trying to talk to you. Because you are enthralled by her.
- “You focus on her 100% when she talks. You lean toward her, your breathing matches hers. Your pupils dilate. You listen to her words and her intent. You respond to what she has said. And you wait your turn, because what she says has merit.
- “You take the initiative in contacting her. And you let her know that’s because she’s important to you.
- “You take the initiative in pleasing her, too. You give her gifts and compliments. You rub her back and feet. You draw a bath for her. You fondle her thoroughly and completely, at least once a day. And you have sex with her the way she wants to have it.
- “You are her champion with others. You protect her from threats large and small. You advocate for her, you occasionally explain her to others. You smooth her path whenever possible. And you never throw her under the bus.
- “And you honor her by a ready dependence on three crucial phrases

1. “That’s an excellent point. I’ve changed my mind,

2. “I am so sorry. I was wrong. How can I make this right?”
3. “That was wonderful. Thank you so much.”

I let the last points hang in the air for a bit, then asked Brad to open his eyes and turn his chair around so we were looking at each other. “Exceptional rendition, Brad. You’ve updated things a bit. But you’re in line with the pros. I first encountered this approach in the discourses of Cicero. It’s also the core of How to Win Friends and Influence People the perennial best seller by Dale Carnegie. It shows up in Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. And, most recently, I read it in a book on servant leadership that we’re reading for my church council. What you’ve discovered is the core of what has come to be called the Emotional Intelligence movement.”

“You son of a bitch!” he belly laughed. “You knew this stuff all along. You son of a bitch. That was good. But here’s the thing. Becky and I never read any of that stuff about influencing Martian women or influencing Cicero. Honest. So where’d that come from?”

I smiled. “Emotional Intelligence. That’s where it came from. Your innate emotional intelligence. I think we’re born with it. It’s like our innate understanding of pain and pleasure, good and bad, right and wrong. You’re just a bit more articulate than the average guy, so you packaged it well.”

“Cool. Here’s the thing. It transfers from the bedroom to the boardroom, and to the factory floor. Not directly. You substitute for the sex and touching stuff. But everything else transfers as is. Turns out that I’ve been ignoring my key reports for years. They walk in and I never look up. I just give ‘em the barrel roll hand signal and half listen, all without losing a beat in my texting, emailing, web searching or monitoring stock prices. Oh I talk to them a

lot, and I require them to talk to me a lot – at least once a week – to see if they hit their numbers for that week. But it’s been a long time since I really asked anyone for their opinion. And even longer since I actually listened to what they thought. I know. I know. Fuck me.”

I just held out my hands and cocked my head.

He continued, “Well, I used it this week. Love is a verb. It was pretty impressive. Snarley looks disappeared. Posture improved. Defensive actions lightened up. It was like I’d opened the window shades.”

“Did you look in the mirror?” I asked.

“No, I ... No. Do I look different?”

I chuckled, “Yeh. Your posture’s better. So’s your voice. And someone loosened that bolt in the middle of your forehead. The one that pulls all the furrows in your brow toward the top of your nose. You see, it’s tough to be snarley when you’re in mid-seduction.”

“So ... maybe they were just reacting to ME being more positive?”

“Ladies and gentlemen. Learning has just occurred.” I beamed at him.

“Son of a bitch.” He murmured. “So that’s all it takes?”

“No. But it sure creates a great context for all the other stuff, doesn’t it?”

“Yeh. But one of the guys told me I was pursuing a pussy strategy. I didn’t appreciate that.”

“Why not?”

“It only looks like I’m being a pussy. It’s just basic human decency.”

“Are you sure that’s what he meant? Maybe he went to State University.”

“Yeh, he did. What’s that got to do with it?”

“Did he major in Psych?”

“Yeh”

“Then he meant something different. He studied under old Fletcher Smyth, who had studied under Freud, or Viktor Frankl or Carl Jung. I forget which. Anyway, Smyth was famous for telling his teaching assistants about the ‘Pussy Strategy’ that Freud or whoever had taught him. It was just the standard emotional intelligence stuff.”

“So why’d he call it the ‘Pussy Strategy’?”

Because his mentor had told him that with this strategy you could get all the pussy you wanted. Hence – ‘Pussy Strategy’.

Quick giggle. “He’s right. Bless his heart. It does work.”

He sat there chuckling quietly for a moment while he rubbed his hands. “And I know why it works.” He said. “It makes them visible. I see them. It tells them I see them. Like in the movie Avatar. ‘I see you’ means I see your heart, your soul, your mind – all together. It’s like the Old Testament term – Abraham ‘knew’ Sarah. It wasn’t a euphemism for sex. It was a statement that sex was much more than friction. You knew the girl down to the very fiber of your being.”

“OK. So it makes them visible. And that triggers what?”

“Wait.” he showed me his palm. “Wait. We did this last week or the week before. The light bulb factory. The Hawthorne effect. Making them visible triggers the Hawthorne Effect. It changes their behavior.”

“Ah, Grasshopper. You make me proud.”

He grinned. “Fuck me. Here’s my theory. Visibility kills their sense of isolation. And the fact that I listen gives

them reason to believe that they are not helpless, since I may act on what they say. And when helplessness recedes, so does hopelessness. And that relieves stress and eventually anxiety. And all of that pulls them out of one of the circles of Hell.”

“Not bad for a day’s work.” I said. “What you’re doing is building your psychic bank account with them. They’re the bank. Every time you convince them you like them, a deposit is made. Every time you exhibit trust, clink! Another deposit. Every time you listen. Every time you let them be a star, help them achieve a goal, serve as their ambassador and buffer – clink, clink clink. You build your psychic nest egg. Then when you need it – they dole out the treasure, which they now owe you. He nodded.

“But there’s a catch.” I said. “You have to do this all the time, now. Remember that part of about fondling her, every day? Well that’s what you need to do. Psychic fondling. Every day. Constantly let them know they’re visible and appreciated.”

“Every day?”

“Yep. Every day. You ever seen a couple that was once young and in love, after the juice is gone?”

“Yeh. I think my own folks were just such a couple. Cordial, but dry. They must have been extremely lonely together. But my Uncle Harry still has a love affair with Aunt Sally. And they’re a lot older than my folks were. He gooses her a lot. And she giggles every damn time.”

“They’re still fondling, physically as well as emotionally. It keeps the juice flowing.”

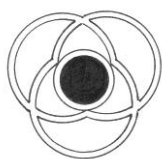
“Why is that?”

“Because it is so easy to slip back into invisibility and the parade of horrors that follows it. We are so willing to believe

the worst, or least, about ourselves. And the world seems so eager to help us do so. If we don't have someone whispering in our ear how wonderful we are, we just let the world suck away the juice."

"Becky says we have to hear a compliment 5 times before we believe it. But we only need to hear a criticism once."

"Becky's a bright girl."



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to love people into
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Chapter 8

UNREQUITED LOVE

Brad was crestfallen. “I give up Doc. I spent the whole week loving those turkeys like a verb. I listened. I paused. I focused. I stroked. I took the time to explain. So ask me what happened.”

“I’ll bite. What happened?”

“Shit happened, that’s what. Everyone stopped working. Started yelling at me. Bitching and moaning about everything. Skipping work. Taking advantage, dogging it, faking injuries. Milking Worker’s Comp. I can’t deal with this crap.” He buried his head in his hands.

The bulk of Chapter 8 has been omitted from this examination copy

It covers:

- De-traumatize yourself: specifics vs generalities
- Weakness and Strength: being a pussy
- No response it a response
- Tough love: policy, discipline & enforcement
- Proportional response: save the baby, dump the water
- Symbolic actions
- Wading across the racial divide
- Igniting a fire storm on purpose
- Civil discourse as a 2-way street
- Checking your ego at the door



Chapter 9

WHAT

“I got lots of issues today.” He started abruptly. “No small talk. Nothing about Becky and the kids. No sports, politics or anything. Just straight to the “I got lots of issues today”.

“Shoot.”

“I spent the first two days squeezing my ego out of the situation.” He twisted his head to de-kink his neck. “That isn’t as easy as you’d think. But I finally got to a point where I felt I was dispassionate. So I fired the angry babes, fined the bowling guys and threw the book at my Worker’s Comp guy. Charged him with criminal fraud and fired him the moment the doctor gave me his report. Had an all hands meeting. Talked about my commitment to them and the firm. Explained the rules of civil discourse we were going to follow. Talked about honoring each other. Told them of my responsibility to make sure we had an atmosphere of comity and hope. Then I announced my various disciplinary actions, named names and gave them the reasons why.”

“And...?”

“And? The firings were cathartic. One of the ladies threw an absolute fit, throwing things all over the place and screaming at the top of her lungs. She called me every name in the book and was screaming threats as the cops hauled her out. The other one wilted into a pool of tears when her turn came. Weeping and gnashing her teeth. I fully expected her to launch into her “Please don’t go firin’ me now massa Brad” routine. At least the first one was a consistent bully.

“The Worker’s Comp scammer got the perp walk treatment from the cops. Walked him the full length of the factory floor in cuffs. So by the time I got to the bowling guys they were delighted to keep their jobs. They virtually thanked me for the fines.”

“And ...?”

“And, reactions were mixed. Folks seemed to appreciate losing the two ladies. A couple of folks said thanks and two asked me what took so long. The rest simply said nothing. No one has said a thing about the scammer. The perp walk traumatized everyone. I did have several folks tell me the bowling fines were great, and one told me they had all been wondering what the point of integrity was around here. Apparently I’ve been a long time victim of pilfering and malingering. I’ve had two guys volunteer to help me clean up that mess.”

“And ... ?”

“And I had perfect attendance at the all hands meeting. It was tense, and surly and I wasn’t sure I was going to make it through. But they warmed up a bit as I spoke about honor and mutual respect. I’m not sure I won a lot of converts, but I didn’t face open rebellion. So I count that a win.”

“Good. You did an incredibly hard thing. Good for you. So?”

“So --- And ---? What? If you want something, use your words.”

I laughed. “Yeh, Okay. My words. You’re running a business, Brad. Not a church. Being nice to one another only counts if it translates into profits. So did it?”

“No. Not a dime. I know it’s too early to tell for sure. But I don’t see any improvement at all. Folks are still milling around waiting for someone else to make their decisions. They still flood me with inane questions. Well, they didn’t

for a full day after the blood bath. Then they've been making up for lost time ever since."

"So, love doesn't translate into productivity then, does it?"

"No. Why is that?"

"Well, first of all they don't trust you yet. You spent a whole lot of years abusing them, usually by neglect. They're not sure if this change is dependable. That'll take a while, especially since you've got a union organizer or two buying these guys a beer after work just to help them not trust you."

"I've got unions sniffing here?"

"Of course you do."

"Son of a bitch. How do you know that?"

"You told me. Last week. By the time an owner suspects he's got unions at his door, they've been there for a while. You've got unions at the door, Brad."

"Shit."

"Flush. Let's move on. We were talking about why love doesn't translate into productivity. Second reason, fatigue. Stress and fear are tiring. Most people need to sit and rest after a trauma ends. Your folks are resting."

"So being nice to them is bad business for me?"

"In the immediate term, yeh. But that problem will heal itself. Your big problem remains number 3."

"Number three. Oh yeh I agree whole-heartedly. What the hell is number 3?"

"They don't know where the end zone is. Or how they're going to get there."

"Bullshit. I tell them everyday."

“No, you don’t, Brad. You tell them how to do the minutia of their jobs everyday. You guys are so busy trying to make a first down that none of you has a clue where the end zone is.”

He bristled at that. “I’ve spent a lifetime putting together processes and procedures. If everyone just did as they were told we’d hit the end zone every single play.”

“Yeh, and the second coming will occur at the precise moment that every Jew hits his knees in prayer. But both are impossibilities ... because humans are involved. They never do exactly what they’re told. Ever.”

“Which is why I have to watch them like a hawk.”

“You’re trying to teach a pig to sing, Brad. It’ll never learn. So you just irritate the pig, and wear yourself out in the process.”

“Amen to that.”

“So how’s that working for ya?”

He glared at me out of the top of his eyes, “How dya think?”

“You might want to try approximate control. Show ‘em the end zone. Show ‘em out of bounds. Tell ‘em to score. Bring ‘em lots of water and lead the cheering.”

“I got lost in the metaphor, Doc. Try it again.”

“OK, fair enough. Performance is a direct result of our behavior, right?”

“OK.”

“And our behavior is a direct result of our beliefs. Right?” He hesitated. “Come on, Brad. I believe I will hit the ball if I take a swing. So I take a swing.”

“In football?”

“In baseball, Brad. Keep up. It’s baseball.”

“There’s an end zone in baseball?”

“That’s football. There is no fucking end zone in baseball.”

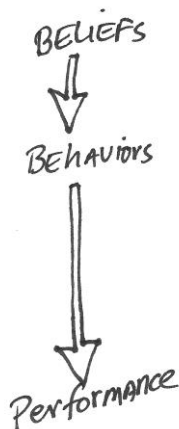
He started to laugh, “There’s no crying in baseball, Doc. Try to keep up.”

Mixing metaphors in conversation is no more successful than in writing.

“Let’s go back to the beginning.” I drew on my white board while I talked.

“Would you agree with me that what you believe, affects how you behave?”

He nodded. “And would you agree that what we do, how we behave, affects our performance?” He nodded again.



“So if I want to affect the behavior that affects performance, what should I do?”

He hesitated, “Work on the beliefs?”

“Yes! But why?” I asked. He hesitated, so I took it, “Because once I affect their beliefs, all their imperfect, incomplete, partially competent actions will at least be aimed in the right direction. It’s called ‘Alignment’. Why else?”

He kicked into gear, “Efficiency. Because in the time it takes to micro-manage one guy on one task on one machine – or one supervisor, who micro-manages one guy on one task on one machine – in that same amount of time, I could establish a new belief that would redirect the behavior of all 163 of my employees.”

I smiled.

“But wait,” he intoned with a smirk. “There’s more. As the CEO, I’m supposed to float at 30,000 feet looking at the big picture and spotting new rivers of cash. If I’m trying to fiddle with specific behaviors and performance levels, I’m not at 30,000 feet. I’m at 15 feet, or ground level. So – hold on to your hat Doc. I need to work on my own beliefs about what I need to be doing.”

I nodded.

He grabbed the marker from me and stepped to the board. “So we’ve been ignoring beliefs, and plowing all our resources into training and processes down here at the behavioral level. And just to make sure we never smell the air at 30,000 feet we use a boundless system of reports and sanctions to tie us down here at the performance level.”



I nodded again.

He continued, “How come nobody tells us this stuff?”

“They’ve been trying,” I said, “Since Socrates’ time. Your folks need to believe that they’re a team. They need to believe that they can win. They need to believe that it matters whether they win. They need to believe that an end zone exists and they need to believe they can get there.”

“OK,” he responded “But all I’ve got now is a motivated, but disorganized mob roaming their way in the general direction of the end zone. Tough to make progress.”

“Right. So now you put some time and resources into training and processes. Who’s a running back? Who’s a lineman? What does each one do? How do they coordinate their activities? And you practice. Lord, you practice. This stuff is right out of role theory. Clarity, congruence and consistency.”

“But then the game starts and all hell breaks loose, because the other team does new stuff and my guys forget their stuff. So I have to climb back into the trenches and beat them into shape.”

“And that’s where you go wrong, every single time. What you have to do is let go. Trust your folks. Of course they will screw up specific things now and then. But trust that they will operate as a cooperative team, headed generally in the right direction. Your team does NOT need you down in the trenches. They need you floating up there at 30,000 feet, figuring out how to counteract the new stuff your opponent is doing. So, let go and let yourself float, Brad.” I erased the board. “Sit down.”

He sat. “Okay, I’m floating. Now when do we talk about the What? What it is I want them to do. That’s the next topic in our litany of topics. We got sidetracked for two weeks on love, and we’ve wasted most of today talking about religion. When do we get to the What?”

“You are *the* dumbest smart guy I think I’ve ever met. We’ve been talking about “What” the whole time.

- You treat your employees with affection — that’s *what*
- You create an atmosphere of safety – that’s *what*.
- You demand civility and honor – that’s *what*.
- You focus on getting into the end zone – that’s *what*.
- You stay out of the trenches – that’s *what*.
- You trust your employees – that’s *what*.

Now, do you want more “*what?*”. Teach them what is moral, ethical and ennobling. Teach them what is just. Teach them their own potential and the importance of brushing their teeth.”

He sat in stunned silence.

I continued. “You wanted me to tell you how to crush the human spirit and force it into compliance. That’s the “What” your initial wail was all about. Problem is that traps you into being the jailer. You can never take a vacation when you’re a jailer. The moment you step away, the prisoners will rebel and escape and go on a rampage and rape your wife and kill your children. Hell of a life, Brad. Hell of a life.”

He shuffled his feet. “Yeh, well ...”

I climbed off my soapbox. “Okay, I’m off the soap box.”

“Good. It was getting a little sudsy in here.”

“Yeh, well, here’s an idea for your big ‘what’. Teach them to play.”

“What?”

“Teach them to play. Here’s what I mean. Your son is 12. Is he ever too tired to take out the garbage or rake the leaves?”

“Always.”

“Is he ever too tired to play with his friends?”

“Never.”

“Why is that?”

“Because work wears you out, and play energizes you.” He started to smile. “Whoa. If we made work into play, my folks would be energized and their performance would take care of itself.”

“Over-simplified, but yeah.”

“Okay. How do I do it?”

“Start by realizing that play is a fantasy world in which we give expression to our hopes, dreams, fears, wants and needs. And that’s true whether we’re playing baseball, poker or house.

“It is a separate reality where actions do not denote what they would if performed during "normal reality". The justice department doesn't nail you with an anti-trust suit for the avarice you display playing "Monopoly". And you can literally beat somebody into submission on the football field and get cheered rather than jailed.

“So play is a safe harbor for the soul. As a result, we invest ourselves more fully in play than any other activity known to man. More effort. More focus. More sacrifice. More creativity. More enthusiasm. More desire. More competitiveness.” He had moved to the edge of his seat. “You want some of this?” I asked.

“Ye-ah.”

“Then all you need to do is supply safety and stimulation.”

“Bullshit. Nothing is that simple”

“You’re right. There are components. First of all, play is episodic. It has boundaries of time and space. It ends. And then you get to start all over again with a clean slate. Poker is the best example. You get your butt kicked in one hand. So what? They’re already re-dealing. Hot dog! Hope springs eternal. Let’s play.

“Yeh,” snorted Brad, “but work never ends. It is eternal, and all pervasive. How do you get past that one?”

“Nothing is perfect Brad. We can’t get rid of those facts. So work can never be pure play. But, it can be made more play-like. Break things into bite-sized chunks: stage 1, stage 2 etc. Then pause for a moment and celebrate the completion of each stage. Pass out a brownie, lead a cheer, pat somebody on the back. Bingo! You’ve just injected episodes into work.”

“Ok,” said Brad. “Not bad. What else.”

“The world has two places: in here, and out there. When bad things happen in here they are a threat. I have to duck and cover or run away. When bad things happen out there, I can man the ramparts, hurl insults and take my time firing down upon its head. Nobody gets thrown in jail for unsportsmanlike conduct. No one loses their house in reality because they lost a house in Monopoly. In play, the bad things occur out there, not in here, which make them a challenge, not a threat. So I can react heroically rather than cowardly.”

“Which is okay,” said Brad, “until I point out that folks really do get promoted or fired based on what they do at work. Everything happens ‘in here’ at work.”

“Yeh, well that’s *your* fault, Brad. It ain’t perfect, but you can move play ‘out there’ by doing three things.

First, teach your supervisors to take the heat for their subordinates. Stop throwing them under the bus at every opportunity.

Second, have your supervisors separate criticisms about work from criticisms about the person.

Third, teach your supervisors to praise in public and criticize in private. Together, those three things start to build a safe ‘in here’ here.”

“Hmmm. I don’t know ... it might work. What else?”

“There is no obligation to play. Folks can come and go as they please.”

“Oh yeah. Like that’d work. Brother, if you don’t work, you don’t get paid.”

“Yeah. You and I both know that you can’t tell employees to work only when the urge strikes them. However, by introducing flexibility into the choice of sales territories, procedures, schedules, techniques and hours, the essence of free engagement can be approached. It ain’t pure play but it’s a lot closer to it than you are now.”

“I’ll grant you that. Okay, everyone is bathed in safety now. Is it play yet?”

“Only half way there. Without stimulation, the safety stuff leads to inertia. You become a slug. To create play, you’ve got to light a fire under folks. That’s why play is ultimately *always* about power. I wish to score a touchdown, you wish me not to. The Martians wish to eat me, I wish them not to. I wish to achieve par, the golf course wishes me not to. In one way or another, play involves getting others to do something they would not otherwise have done, or, to do something oneself in spite of resistance.

“If you watch a child wash dishes you will note that the job clearly carries the drudgery of work until they envision the sink as a setting for naval battles and thereby make it play. Those dirty dishes become the tools of power in a battle for world dominion.”

“I’ve seen it a hundred times. You’re right. You’re right. BUT, if I empower the inmates, they take over the asylum.”

“The power relationship between you and them isn’t really the issue here. Their need is simply to have power over something.

Consequently, just about any target will do, as long as it's relevant. Heavy advertising increases a sales rep's power relative to buyers. Flex hours give employees power over their own schedules. Some firms allow every assembly line worker the authority to stop production for quality control problems, granting major individual power over the product and the production process. At a minimum, the power issue reverts back to a useful management cliché - always match authority to responsibility. Again, it's not pure play, but it gets you closer to it. ”

“OK. I see that but ...”

“Inmates running the asylum? Brad you *want* your employees to take over the company.”

“I do?”

“Yeah. You do. That's when it becomes self-sustaining. That's when you can step back and use it like an asset, instead of carrying it around on your back. You can step away from it and pursue another dream. You can live in the Bahamas. You can sell it. Getting your employees to take over is a good thing, Brad. Not a bad thing.”

“Oh shit” he muttered to himself. “Fuckin’ A.

Yeahyeahyeah. No. You're right.”

“Just do it by evolution, not revolution. By delegation, not abdication.”

“Yehyehyeh. I got it igotit.”

“As part of that, stop squashing individuality. The second ingredient of stimulation is personal strategizing. . Even in highly structured play, such as football or basketball, players still exercise a high degree of individual strategizing in terms of split second decisions and specific executions. Give ‘em their head. You focus on the beliefs. Yes, there is an end zone, it's

down thatta way. And we score 6 points every time we get there. Go.”

“Just keep pointing them in the right direction?”

“Yep. And make that end zone the most important thing in the world. Everything else becomes petty in comparison. Status, parking places, who looked at whom sideways; it all takes a backseat to getting to the end zone.”

“OK. Aim at the end zone, make it the most important goal. Got it.”

“Not yet but almost. In most play, the outcomes are very certain - chips, points, victory, defeat - but the attainment of them is uncertain. However, for most employees, work is the opposite. The attainment holds no uncertainty (if I push the button, the machine will operate); however, the end results are so invisible or detached from their actions that there is great deal of uncertainty about what the outcomes really are. The final ingredient of play is you’ve got to manage the uncertainty.”

“Aha!” spouted Brad. “The first circle of hell.”

“Actually, the second. But you’re right on target.”

“I can do this one myself, Doc. I need to give my folks the tour.”

“The tour?”

“Yeah. The tour. Ford Motor Company discovered that giving workers the plant tour taken by tourists suddenly drew a connection for the widget popper at station 367 between her work and what rolled off the end of the line. It also led to a considerable number of ideas on speeding up the production process.”

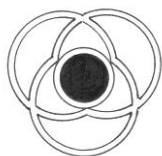
I liked this. He was good. “Is that it?”

“In your dreams, old man. There was a supervisor at the naval shipyard when I was working my way through college who held a 1-hour seminar on the shop floor every month called ‘why we do what we do.’ The answer was always the same – ‘to sink #!@ Commies, ‘cause they’ll take away our booze and the best women when they take over.’ Simplistic, chauvinistic and paranoid. Also, terribly effective. His guys worked their butts off.”

“Congratulations. Now put all these pieces together and you’ve got play.”

“Not bad, Doc. Not bad. So let me sum up our day,” he stood. “Kick their butts. And teach them to play.”

“Yeah,” I said. “It’s called tough love.”



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Chapter 10

I, ME, MINE

He showed up in a foul mood. You could see it in the way his head descended into his shoulders, like a turtle preparing for battle. Turns out he'd taken a few steps backward at the office and home as well. His employees were, according to Brad, surly. And his wife had cut him off and asked him to sleep on the couch. "The piss ants are swarming and I'm about to eradicate them all, Becky included."

"Piss ants?" I inquired.

"Yeh – piss ants. Little insignificant shits that think more of themselves than is realistic."

"Becky, too?"

"Yeh, you as well."

Chapter 10 has been omitted from this examination copy

It covers:

- Why they should obey
- Ownership vs authority
- Earning worthiness in the eyes of your employees
- The entrepreneur's hot button
- The volcanic response
- Standing your ground: The ultimate limit on abuse
- Knowing your own hot buttons



Chapter 11

TELL

Becky called me that afternoon. “Have you seen Brad since your morning session?” she asked. “He never showed up at work. And he hasn’t been home either. I’m worried.”

“I kicked him out,” Becky. He crossed the line with me, and I was also worried that anything further would cause him to bust a blood vessel. I’m a bit worried myself. Did something happen this past week that I should know about?”

“Yeh. Are you sure you want to know?”

“Absolutely,” I said.

“No, really. Are you sure?”

“I am. Why the mystery?”

“He tied me up last night. Pounced on me at about midnight, slapped me when I resisted, tied me to the bedposts and essentially raped the shit out of me. Twice. At first he was enraged, growling over and over that no one would ever tell him ‘No’ again. After the 2nd time he just sunk down beside me on the bed and cried his eyes out. I lay there trussed like the Christmas turkey for at least an hour with his head on my belly and tears running down my abused womanhood. All I could do was soothe him with words of comfort and hope to God he’d untie me before he stroked out completely.”

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Except for a lost husband, I’m terrific.”

“You’re right,” I said, “I didn’t want to know that, Becky.” We shared a disheartened chuckle. “Has he ever done that before?” I asked.

“Not even close,” she said.

“Any idea why, and why now?”

“Yeh, I do now. I talked to Richie Flackner, his Vice President. Brad got into a shoving match with one of his floor supervisors two days ago. The guy is the on-site organizer for a union. He thinks they’ve got enough votes to call for a union election and he shut down the shop floor for 30 minutes so they could make the announcement to Brad en masse. He fired them all, on the spot. Every last one of them. At which point the supervisor introduced some government guy that said no one could be fired for union activity. That’s when Brad lost it. He decked the government dweeb and hit the supervisor with everything he’s got. But Brad’s just an ex-swimmer. The supervisor played tackle for Clemson. So the supervisor didn’t budge. At which point Brad just started pushing him like a side-by-side freezer and fridge. Lots of grunts, but no movement.”

“And...” I prodded her.

“And he spent 7 hours at the county jail on charges of assault and battery. He’s out on bail. Pillar of the community. Not a flight risk. The whole litany – right out of Perry Mason.”

By this time, of course, I was about ready to turn in my diplomas and counseling credentials. I had clearly failed Brad this morning. First rule, go where the client is. Deal with their stuff first, then get them back on the therapy path. I had bulldozed right past a clearly distressed client, racing my way to excellent – but ultimately wasted - teaching points. “I am so sorry, sis. I blew this one. I did him more harm than good today. Worst thing is that I literally abandoned him in his hour of need. I feel awful.”

“Who the hell cares what you feel like? Get out there and find my husband!” said Becky.

“Yeh, right.” I responded. “I know where he probably went.” I paused and pondered for a moment ... then committed, “If you don’t mind me asking, how was it?”

“What?”

“The sex.”

“Tied up? It was actually pretty good. That was the most passion between us in 12 years. All the more reason to find him. Go.”

“I’m on it.” I hung up and walked out the door. Brad’s a Lutheran. Chairman of the church. Been active his whole life. But since a Lutheran is just a wanna-be Catholic, Brad had always been drawn to the smells and bells of the mother church. I went straight to St. Bartholomew’s, the catholic church a block from Brad’s factory. Stood in the back for a full 15 minutes to let my eye’s adjust to the dark. Then I saw him kneeling motionless in a pew up front.

I sat down beside him, and after a minute or two put my hand silently on his shoulder. “You’re not alone, Bubba.” I said. He tilted his head to one side, then slowly shrugged his shoulders and pulled himself up to a sitting position beside me.

“Maybe not,” he said. “How’d you know?”

“Where? You screwed up big time this week. On top of years of little screw ups. If ever you’re gonna be in need of the Almighty, I think today’s the day. You know where he lives. So do I.”

“But this isn’t my church.”

“Yeh, I know. But yours doesn’t use prayer candles. When life is falling apart, you’re the kinda guy who wants to do

something. It ain't much, but lighting a candle is doing something."

"So's confession," said Brad.

"No kidding?" I responded. "How was that?"

"Not bad" said Brad. "About like a session with you – but shorter."

I chuckled. "I'll have to do better. But right now I need to do a little confessing myself. I let you down today, Brad. I didn't stop to realize how badly you were hurting. It was my fault that the whole thing ended up being a fuck-knuckle. I am truly sorry."

"Sheeit, Doc. Listen to you. You're not that important. We both screwed up. I gotta mouth. I shoulda interrupted and told you that my world had fallen apart this week. My bad. So forget about it. Besides, you were unknowingly narrating my life, and my week. That's what made it so infuriating. You knew what was going on – without knowing what was going on. If it was that predictable, I should have been able to avoid it. I made such a mess of things."

"I know."

"And Becky."

"I know. Yeh, she told me."

"Have I lost her too?"

"Don't think so. She kinda' liked the passion."

"That was good," he smiled sheepishly.

"But if you ever hit her again ..."

"I know. Never. I swear."

"Yeh, let's get out of here," I suggested. We did. It took us 20 minutes to amble the 8 blocks to my office. "I cleared the rest

of my afternoon,” I said. “Would you like to sit a spell? We can talk – or not - at your pleasure.”

“That would be nice,” he said. “I’m really tired.” He sat down and removed his sunglasses so he could rub his eyes. When he looked up, I was shocked to see that both of them looked like open wounds – bright red, with little gummy deposits on the outer corner of each. “If you don’t mind, I’ll just catch 40 winks here.” He was asleep as he uttered the last word. I called Becky and let her know I’d found him and what his condition was. She shared my concern about his eyes, and said she’d contact his doctor and email me his response.

I busied myself with paperwork for the next hour, then he woke up, fresh as the proverbial daisy.

“Did I just doze off, here?” He asked. “I’m sorry. Where were we? OK, you’d just finished with the limits to power and their affect on my moral authority to lead, right?”

“Yeh, right,” I said.

“Okay,” said Brad. “That leaves one last word to consider – then we’re done.”

“You okay, Brad?” I asked.

“Yeh, I am. Feel great. Why?” His eyes had cleared up remarkably. Just a tad bit of pink in the right one. This was just too quick of a turn around. “If I recall correctly, the last word is ‘TELL’, isn’t it?” he asked.

“Yeh. What? Yeh. Tell. That’s right. Tell.”

“Communication.”

“Yeh.”

“How do they know what I want them to do?”

“Yeh.” I wasn’t hitting on all pistons. Something wasn’t right.

“Luther had it right you know.” said Brad.

“He what?”

“He had it right.” repeated Brad. “Question – how do you know the will of God?”

“I don’t know, Brad. Is this a trick question?”

“Luther didn’t joke,” intoned Brad. “You know what God wants you to do because:

- One - it is written down
- Two – it’s written down all in one place – The Bible
- Three – it’s written about at length, in considerable detail
- Four – it is consistent with everything else we know about God

He was good, pink eye and all. “So, Luther ruled out secret personal messages - personal revelations,” I said, “as well as unauthorized source material, out of context snippets and obviously made up BS. Luther was a sharp cookie.”

“Hell of an executive, you mean,” said Brad. “No wonder his reformation held together when most of the rest of them have fallen apart. He made sure they had a core. Lutherans knew what to do. The others were wandering in the wilderness. How come I never saw this before? Luther pioneered the policy handbook.” He shook his head.

“You got one?” I asked.

“Yeh,” he guffawed. “In name only. I haven’t made an addition to it since we came out with our harassment policy in ’98. My folks don’t know ‘the will of Brad’. I haven’t been writing things down, clearly, at length and in one place. Not to mention, that my mood swings make me so inconsistent that my words have nothing to be consistent with. Damn. A 16th century monk knows more about running my company than I do. And he’s been dead for 500 years. Damn.”

He smiled the smile of a man who'd unlocked a lifelong mystery, only to find how simple it was – sheepish delight. Then he just went blank and kind of collapsed in on himself. It took about 15 seconds in all, then he was out like a light. But his breathing remained steady, along with his pulse.

Becky emailed. The doctor said not to worry as long as his pulse was below 90 and his blood pressure below 150/100. Just bring him around tomorrow for a check up. We decided to keep him at my office as long as he wanted to stay, but I asked her to stop by in an hour or so, just to be available for the ride home.

Forty three minutes later he popped right up again. “I don’t think that’s the whole solution, though” said Brad.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Simply writing things down,” said Brad. “I actually do that pretty well – I just do it by email instead of putting them in hard copy.”

“Do you label your policy statements as such?” I asked

“Ah no, what do you mean?”

“Simply label them. Big bold headline at the top of the page – “Policy # xxx” with the date. It tends to cut through the clutter.”

“That’s a great idea, Doc. Can I borrow a pencil and some paper?” He started to rifle through the stuff on my desktop.

“But you know, even if I did that, I’d still have problems. It’s like I’m speaking a foreign language.”

“You are. You’ve got to remember to pearl two before you knit one.”

“You what?” he laughed.

“Pearl two before you knit one” I repeated. Any one who’s knit a scarf knows that’s a standard pattern. So the expression, to anyone with half a brain, means to do things the traditional way.”

“To whom?” he continued laughing.

“To 57% of your work force. The ones with boobs. Most of them learned to knit as little girls.”

He stopped laughing. “Good point.”

“It’s as though every one has a separate language, even though we all use the same words,” I said, “because each of us encodes and decodes those words and phrases to mean something a little different.”

“Because, because, because.” Brad interrupted “because (he got it) each one of us has a different life experience. I was never a little girl. My female employees never played football. I never gave birth. They never had an embarrassing erection. I never had a period. So women really do speak Venusian, while I speak Martian.”

“Yep. And some of your folks, men and women, speak republican while others speak democritian. Some, Rotarian. Others Optimist. And still others – Masonite. It’s like going to Rome every time you say good morning, much less when you try to communicate something complex – like a marketing plan. And we know that when in Rome -----”

He missed a beat but I could see the wheels turning, “... do as the Romans, ah think Roman thoughts, talk like a Roman. I got it. Speak Latin! When in Rome, speak Latin.” He beamed.

“So when you want folks to show some initiative, don’t write ‘show a little initiative’ because nobody knows what the heck that means. That’s Owneranian, not Latin. You’ve got to translate your language into theirs or there is no hope whatsoever. Describe what initiative is – in their language.

What does it look like, feel like, taste like. How will they know when they're showing it? How will you know when they're showing it? How will they know that you know? Break it down. Use small words. Put it in a linear progression ... if→then→if→then."

Brad walked around a bit. "This is good stuff, Doc. But it's still not going to break through to them. Not all of them, anyway. How 'bout if I show them, you know - demonstrate, role model, share, I don't know - explain, paint a picture? What am I looking for here?"

I ventured, "Sounds like teaching to me."

"Teaching! Bingo! That's it! Teaching. Yeh. That's what I was looking for. That goes beyond simple telling doesn't it?"

"Sure does," I smiled.

"But that's not all," said Brad as he paced the office. "We, I mean I, could also communicate by asking questions. I read that's better than simply telling. You know, probing questions. Investigation. Research. That thing you do, Doc. When you guide me down the primrose path, one question at a time."

"The Socratic method," I said.

"Yeh the Socratic method. I call it being the manipulative listener."

"Ha!" I laughed. "That's actually a good description.

He played around with some of the educational books on my shelf. Then turned to ask, "So how do we learn things, anyway? I mean that's a pretty amazing process isn't it?"

"Yes it is," I walked to the bookcase. "Amazing may not actually be a strong enough word. Everything that we think, feel and do comes from learning; formal, informal or accidental."

“Cognitive, affective and kinetic. Think, feel and do.” He grinned as he slid the book back in place. “I paid attention in class. More than I knew.”

“Not bad, kiddo.” I grinned back. “And how do we get those inputs?”

“Geeze. Gimme a minute here.” He studied his toes. “

- Um, the drill method, what is it – ah ‘Rote’.” He held up one finger.
- Then a second “or experiential, or via dialogue” two more fingers “and/or case study.” He held up a handful of fingers and laughed

“That’s all I got, Doc. How many did I miss?”

I patted him on the shoulder, “Outstanding work. I’d add only ‘enculturation’. There’s some debate, but I think it’s a stand-alone phenomena. Other folks would also list observation and comparison, but I think they’re just mechanical methods that fall under one or all of the items you’ve already listed. But don’t get tied up too much in the academic fine points. Stick to the basics. Mankind is hungry for knowledge. Even Joe six-pack wants to learn. Just put people and information in close proximity to one another, and Mother Nature takes care of the rest. Look at everything you’ve retained.”

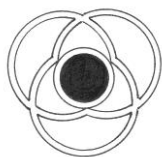
“Yeh, but how do you translate that learning into performance? See that’s the rub for me, and thousands like me. How do we get better performance?”

“Short answer?” I asked. He nodded. “Okay. Post it vertical and keep score.”

“That’s it?” he was surprised.

“That’s it. Anytime you want them to pay attention to something, post it vertical. Hang it on a wall, a coke machine a home page. Just put it someplace conspicuous where nothing

can be put on top of it. Vertical is best. Then keep score. Most Americans salivate like Pavlov's dog as soon as you announce we're keeping score. Americans love competition, even if it's against themselves."



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when my life goes
off the rails like
this?

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Chapter 12

CHANGE

Brad walked in without a care in the world, looking like a pie-eyed imbecile. We debriefed his week. He'd spent the past 7 days pursuing a charm offensive. He talked to anybody and everybody. He called in every chit. And it worked. The federal agent dropped the battery charges. He claimed he'd actually slipped and it was all a misunderstanding. Brad and the union organizer were scheduled to have drinks and work out the rules of engagement. Brad felt that he could calm the waters and make it all go away.

The rest of Chapter 12 has been omitted from this examination copy

It covers:

- The limited advantage of charm offensives
- Change as an event vs change as a process
- Change & the mourning process
- Taking time to bury the dead
- What happens when change is imposed on the king?
- Fighting through the shit storm

It concludes ...

"I just decided it, right here," said Brad. "Right on the spot. Take it to the bank. I will continue the love offensive. I will not go back on that and I will not attack them. Come hell or high water, I'd like to go down like an honorable man."

"Are you sure?"

"Yep."

"So let it be written. So let it be done."



Chapter 13

SATAN AT THE GATE

He'd lost 15 pounds, at least. Looked 10 years older. But he was well scrubbed and had a look of schoolboy eagerness. His left eye had a blood spot on the outside corner.

“How you doing, Brad?”

“I'm fine Doc. I'm exercising more. Lost my appetite. Have the runs everyday. But I think things are working themselves out. I'll be fine. Really. But thanks for asking.”

It was the same response I'd hear from pancreatic cancer victims when they were in the middle of chemo ... two months before they died. Guarded hopefulness, in the face of insurmountable odds. I shared as much with him.

He shook his head and chuckled, “Yeh. It seems that way most days. But what the hell else am I supposed to do? Just give up?”

“What's your doctor say, Brad?”

“Funny you ask. I just saw him yesterday. He says go take a vacation. My blood pressure is up a bit ... 128/100. Not bad, but a clear jump from what it normally was. He gave me some pills that make me pee like a racehorse every 28 minutes, and suggested I hit Club Med somewhere in the Caribbean. Also suggested I leave the cell phone and laptop at home.”

“That's always good advice. But you're not going to follow it. Are you?”

“Naw. How can I? All hell is breaking loose. I need to man my post. I go down with the ship.”

“Is the ship really going down, Brad?”

“Have you been sleeping over there, Doc? I’m on the verge of being unionized. Hell ye... Sorry. Heck yes, it’s about to go down.”

“Brad. You’re nowhere near sinking. Your debt to equity is good. Return on Investment is better than average. Sales and margins are holding steady and cash flow is strong. Best of all, you’ve got a reserve fund that could choke a horse. You’re nowhere near sinking. You’re simply facing a transition that you hate.”

“You sound like a democrat.”

“No, I sound like a republican who’s sick of Sarah Palin logic. You’re letting your politics and your ego get in the way of solid judgment, Brad. You need to shake this off and get back in the game. Becky and the kids need you to. I need you to. And so does your company.”

“My company hates me.”

“No. Your company is indifferent to you. It’s a make believe construct. A legal entity with no emotions whatsoever. Your company has never hated you. It’s never loved you either. You just thought it did, during the easy years.”

“Semantics. What are you getting at?”

“Stick with me for a few minutes here. You’ve gotten yourself into a linear logic trap.” I held up my hand. “Just wait. It’s an A-B-C process.

- A. Something happens (there’s a union at my door);
- B. You make a moral judgment (the forces of Satan himself are upon me);
- C. You react accordingly (your body and spirits are crushed as you prepare for death).

Does that sound about right?”

“Maybe. Where’s this headed?”

“Inside that rock hard head of yours. What if Satan himself weren’t attacking you? What if it’s just your employees trying to get out of their own three circles of hell? That would put you and them on the same page, wouldn’t it?”

His eyes rolled up to the right. He was thinking. “You touched on that a couple of weeks ago.”

“Yeah, I did. Always assume that the other guy is logical, Brad. You just need to find the premise that drives his logic. You folks could all be working off the same ones –

- There is a hell.
- It stands on isolation, uncertainty and helplessness.
- And no one sees me or the problem.

You, yourself, have been screaming that for a year now. I imagine they’ve been doing the same.”

“Son of a bit ... buck.”

“Now if that is the case,” I continued “is the world coming to an end?”

He shook his head, deep in thought.

I waited a moment, then prodded him. “Okay. ‘A’ was accurate, the union is at your door. But ‘B’ turns out to be a functional interpretation, not a moral one. So what does ‘C’ become? Brad?”

“Yeh. Hang on ‘C’ becomes ... ‘it’s a pain in the ass, but I can survive this, if I play my cards right.’ ”

“Does surviving depend on avoiding unionization?”

He looked at me as though my brain was flying straight out my ear. “Well, duh. Yes.”

“Then you need to rethink, Brad. There are 9,732 unionized companies in this country. Only 77 of them went out of

business within a year of being unionized. The facts tell us that unions kill less than 1% of firms. Facts. Not republican propaganda. Unions do not equal death. What they *do* equal is a colossal pain in the ass. Sit down.” He’d popped out of his chair ready for battle. My words were obviously a call to arms. He sat back down. “I’m not in favor of unions, Brad. I just don’t think they’re Satan’s spawn.”

“Coulda fooled me,” he pouted. “If you’re so ...”

“Hang on. I’ll get there in a minute. Let’s finish the important point, first. (C) should be ‘it’s a pain in the ass, but I’ll survive this regardless of the outcome of the union vote’. The fact is, you’ll figure a way to work with the union if you lose. 9,732 have. You can too.”

“The number is only 9,655. Remember, the unions killed 77 of them.”

“I stand corrected. Should we ignore the fact that 13% of the companies that *don’t* get unionized also die each year? Companies die, Brad. Happens all the time. But the fact of the matter is that the ones that get unionized have a better survival rate.”

“I don’t believe it.”

“I know, and well gosh darn it, neither does Sarah Palin. But facts are facts Brad. It’s just that there’s a measurement artifact involved. Only the more prosperous companies are targeted by unions. It does them no good to unionize a sinking ship.”

“Ahhh,” he said. “So the union is an affirmation of my success.”

“Yeah. It’s a vote of confidence. Now let’s look at the question I interrupted a moment ago. If I’m against unions, how would I suggest fighting them? Is that about right?”

“Yeah. So give.”

“Well, first and foremost, go listen to your rank and file folks. Get in their face. Commit to the listening. Look at the back of their eyeballs, Tell yourself ‘not yet, not yet, not yet’. Listen like a cartoon. Go watch tapes of Bill Clinton’s town hall meetings. He was the best listener America has ever turned out. That man could listen shingles off a roof.”

“Ok, I got it. Listen like a pinko.”

“No, listen like a man who unseated an incumbent. That’s the power of listening, Brad. It’s a major component of pussy strategy. Your folks feel invisible. Go make them visible. Walk among the tribe.”

“OK. You make a fair point.” The old Brad was starting to resurface.

“What you’re going to hear is that they want a ‘Get out of Hell’ card. They’re tired of feeling isolated, confused, and helpless. And they feel like their problems have fallen on deaf ears. The saber rattling says, ‘I ain’t invisible anymore, asshole’.”

“OK I get it. I get it. The three circles of hell. Visibility. I get it.”

“I don’t think you do, Brad. You make about a half a million per year right?” With perks, expense accounts etc, it’s about \$650K a year.”

“That’s pretty close.”

“And your lowest paid full time employee, John – the assistant janitor - makes what, \$17,000 a year? Twenty thousand, with perks.”

“I haven’t done the math, but that sounds about right.”

“Did you know that the bottom 90% of your folks average making \$32,000 a year?”

“Damn. How’d it get so high?”

“Do you know what \$32,000 buys you, Brad? A mediocre 1 bedroom apartment, a used car, dining out twice a week – at Taco Bell - a movie with a date, and four drinks by yourself at the emporium of your choice. That’s it. No vacation. No Christmas presents. No anniversary party.”

“That’s not a terrible existence, you know.”

“Unless you want to get married, have kids and send any of them to college. Then things get pretty grim, real fast. The specific numbers aren’t important. The relative numbers *are*, however. I want you to imagine standing in front of your rank and file; better yet, imagine yourself standing in front of the wives and kids of your rank & file. Now explain to them why, exactly, you’re worth 32 times as much as John – who everybody likes. Better still, explain to them why you’re worth 20 times more than their daddy and husband. And why the top 10% of the employees are worth 6 times more than daddy. Go ahead. I’ll wait.”

“That’s why we keep that information secret,” he bristled.

“And you’re missing the entire point, here, Brad. Once the union gets involved that information doesn’t stay secret. You’ve got a real problem here.”

“Son of a bitch. Those fuckers are just after the money. I ...”

“They’re not after the money, Brad. They’re after what the money buys. Respect. Visibility. Dignity. Power. Most of them wouldn’t know what to do with more than \$100,000. It’s not the money. Money is a surrogate for other things.”

“It *is* the money.”

“I’m not getting into a pissing contest with you Brad. Do you want my help, or should we call it a day?”

“No. Go on. I’ve spent the nickel. Gimme what you got.”

“They want to know that incomes are proportional to the worth of each guy’s inputs. You’re not the problem. They recognize that owners take an enormous personal risk and therefore deserve an enormous reward. You live with the immortals. You’re off the grid. The problem exists with the gap between your top 10% and the rank and file. Now they’re comparing mortals and mortals. And your top 10% average 10 times more than poor old John over there pushing his broom. That’s where your problem exists. Why are they worth that much more? Essentially, everything comes down to an issue of perceived fairness.”

“It’s a PR problem.”

“Yeah. A big one. And if that top 10% behaves like a bunch of jerks, it’s an insurmountable problem. If, however, they’re highly competent and have superb emotional intelligence, the problem starts to evaporate. So the question becomes how does your top 10% treat the bottom 90%. Do they keep them in hell, or do they help them out?”

Silence. ... “I don’t know.”

“I’d make that your chief question as you wander among the tribe. And retrain your top 10% based on what you hear. If two guys call their supervisor an ass, you can dismiss it as sour grapes. But if you hear it from a third, buy that super a saddle. He’s an ass. Either retrain him or get rid of him.”

“You’re kidding? You want me to turn my top 10% into gophers and message carriers up the ladder for my rank and file?”

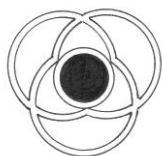
I would have thwacked him on the forehead for a comment like that during calmer times. Instead, I just laughed. “Abso-fucking-lutely you numb nut. What could be better than a firm with a bottom-up communication flow? If each of your top 10 is an advocate for his/her people, your staff meetings suddenly

become meaningful. There's pushing and shoving under the backboard. Energy. Conflict. New ideas. Creative solutions. Growth in the market place."

He started to say something then didn't. He thought for a moment. "It goes back to that love is a verb stuff. Is that what you're saying?"

"Go out and act like you know how to love," I purred.

"What a bucket of horse piss. That's the lamest union-busting strategy I ever heard."



WHY
does stress
make me eat
myself alive?

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Chapter 14

POWER

As it turns out, Brad drank the horse piss. Not all of it, but enough. He walked among the tribe. He listened like Clinton. He felt their pain. He suffered his own. He spoke to them like Reagan, himself. Homespun, sincere, self deprecating. Uncle Brad, sharing ultimate truths over the backyard fence. He learned from his rank and file, and acted on it. He fired two supervisors out of hand, retrained the rest and shifted the mentality from jailers to advocates. Not completely. But he made a noticeable dent in things.

“You’re welcome,” I said.

“I didn’t say thank you,” Brad growled ... Awkward pause.

The rest of Chapter 12 has been omitted from this examination copy

It covers:

- A combative session on the raw use of power
- The bases of power and how to use them
- The right to command & the obligation to obey
- Killing the willingness to fight
- Then anxiety stormed the stage - the stress attack
- And then he stroked

It concludes ...

It is a terror, in it’s suddenness. But then it was completely serene, because Brad simply didn’t live there any more. The rest of us were slamming things around trying to bring him back, but the thing on the floor that used to be Brad was at peace – finally at peace. Like a vacant house



*There is such a thing
as a rabbit hole.*

·
Would you like to go down it?

Chapter 15

THE TIPPING POINT

Brad is dead. Folks contact me all the time and ask why. They're shocked. Flabbergasted. It makes no sense. He was doing so well. He was getting a handle on things. He was making a comeback. So why'd he die? Did I make that up? Maybe he didn't really die. Maybe he had a miraculous recovery at the hospital. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

More than one has called me a real son of a bitch, and a fraud. A couple have attacked my professional competence; if I were any good, he'd still be alive. I even had one report me to the AMA, but I'm not that kind of doctor.

Folks are convinced there is a story behind the story. As it turns out, they're right. There always is. Life is complex. Every event is the intersection of numerous stories. What follows is mine.

But hang on a second. Are you sure you want to hear it? As it is, this has been a nice little cautionary tale. Grim in places, but a nice story none-the-less. If we go any further, it becomes something yet again. You can walk away right here. Just close the book, and walk away. Or you can turn the page and see that other story unfold. Your choice.



Chapter 16

BRAD'S BLOODY EYES

I've spent the last 20 years of my life serving as personal advisor, confidante and coach to 34 entrepreneurs at any one time. Not the kind that peddle questionable goods on late night TV, or out of the back of their van; but the kind that sign over the house, and the kids' college tuition, in order to build a firm that employs 25 to 2,500 people for 15 years or more. My folks add value, to the economy and to people's lives. The last time I checked, we accounted for right around \$8 billion a year in revenue. That's my clientele; my compadres.

We've been to the mountain tops together and we've wallowed in the trenches together. It's been one hell of a journey, in both senses of the phrase. We've met as a group for a full day once a month for 20 years. In between meetings I've sat down with each and every one of them for two hours to talk about the stuff that is too sensitive to even bring up to the group. For 20 years I've been doing that. I've helped them bury their loved ones. I've had a hand in saving two of their kids who were attempting suicide. I've counseled them through courtship, marriage and divorce. I've even performed two marriages. We've done strategic plans together, product roll outs together; chased lines of credit, auditors and deadbeats together. In short, I've become a part of their lives and I care deeply for my folks.

So when I wrote my first book on creativity, I signed a copy of the manuscript for each and every one and ceremoniously passed them out as presents. I had anticipated a steady stream of emails, texts and phone calls commenting on the book. But three months later, not a one of them had so much as cracked the darn thing open. Didn't even pretend that they had. Remember now, these are nice folks. Salt of the earth types.

And they owed me. Not only that, but they also like me. At least, I think so. So this was extremely odd behavior.

At our next group meeting I confronted them on the matter. I noted their decency and basic kindness. I noted our long track record of cordiality and comradeship. I touched on the nature of reciprocal relationships. Then I asked them why no one had read the book.

Silence. Except for the shuffling of feet. Lots of visual interest in the floor. Uncomfortable silence.

Then John, one of my best and brightest blurted out, “I’ll tell you why. I got no goddamned interest in creativity. I’ve spent my entire adult life trying to beat that shit out of my employees.”

Now it was my turn. I stood there in shocked silence and watched the rest nod their heads in silent assent. A room full of CEOs – every one a millionaire, every one a responsible executive – and not a one of them interested in creativity. It boggled the mind.

“Tell you what I would read.” John continued “You write a book called ‘Why the Hell don’t these assholes do what I tell them to do’ and I’ll buy that book!” Nods of assent surrounded the room.

I lost a beat while that sank in, then retorted as best I could, “That’s uncanny. That just happens to be the title of the book I’m working on right now!” Laughter all ‘round. But that night I came home and killed John.

I made him the main character of the new book. At least, I gave his bloody eyes to Brad. That part is absolutely true. They were, and still are, a thermostat announcing his stress level. The rest of Brad’s character is an amalgam of the other

33 CEOs I work with now, plus the 29 others I have worked with over the years. I killed them/him off on page one as a form of perverse black humor – to heal my injured ego and serve as a warning shot across their bow. The message was simply this ...

Trying to impose compliance on your folks will kill you.
Giving them permission to be creative will save you both.

Nice sentiment, but you should never kill someone on a lark, not even in fiction. The moment I did, two things happened. First, it suddenly became a dead-damn serious novel. Second, it wasn't the book I had intended to write.



The interior of Chapter 16 has been omitted from this Examination Copy



It concludes ...

True to his word, John actually read the first 13 chapters of this book. ... I was standing on 47th street in New York City, getting ready to go see “The Lion King,” when he called. He was laughing. “This son of a bitch is going to pull his bacon out of the fire, isn’t he?” John chortled.

...

Two days later, his call was very different. “You son of a bitch. I hate this shit. Why’d you kill him off? It’s like a punch in the gut.”

“John, he didn’t just die,” I said. “He’s been dead for the whole book. I told you that, back on page 1.”

“I know, I know I know.” Said John. “But I thought you’d give him a break - some alternative ending --- you know, saved by his secret knowledge. The whole revelation thing.”

“Ignorance didn’t kill him, John. Stress did.”

“What in the hell am I supposed to do with that?” he asked.

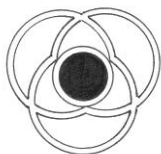
“Well, did you learn anything from the story?” I asked.

“Other than to never read another one of your god-damned books?” he responded.

“Yeh.”

He scratched his forehead and grimaced. “I don’t know. Maybe. The story got in the way. Maybe not. Yeh. I’d get a nugget now and then, but then the story would go on and I’d kind of leave the nugget behind. If you want me to learn something from it, put it on a pedestal and surround it with neon light. And for God’s sake, keep it short. I don’t read when I don’t have to, you know.”

Well John, the next chapter is for you and your bloody eyes. I hope it helps.



THIS BOOK
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not just business.
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read this.

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Chapter 17

SO WHAT WAS THE POINT?

In a nutshell, here's what the book taught us.

Life is hard, full of

- uncertainty
- isolation
- helplessness, and
- despair.

And love is the only way out.

If all you're going to take away is 6 points, those are the 6 points to take. They'll make you more compassionate, more emotionally intelligent, and ultimately, more successful. That's it. Of course, *on the grand scale*, I put a whole lot more than that into the book. Here it is.

The bulk of Chapter 17 has been omitted from this Examination Copy

It rolls out 29 specific take away tactics for mastering stress and using it as a tool; backed up by extensive scholarly work on:

- The Nature of Man
- Power theory - bases, limits and uses
- Conflict Management
- Guilt & Shame
- Leadership & authority
- The 4 Circles of Hell
- The Theory of Love and Work
- Visibility, dignity and violence

It concludes ...

So what should you do about all this?

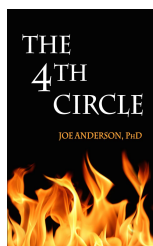
It all boils down to three little cliches' ...

1. *Life is a drama – act like you know what to do. You will eliminate uncertainty for those around you. And when they start acting with courage, some of your own **Uncertainty** will disappear as well.*
2. *Life is a party, be the host.– Never eat alone. Ask a bum to lunch if no one else is available or willing. Then ask them a series of three questions that can't be answered with a yes or a no. And no matter what they say, your response is "That's fascinating. Now I'm just curious, how (or why) did that ..." You will no longer be alone. It is amazing how quickly you can kill **Isolation**.*
3. *Always play offense, even on defense. Defense has to be good on every play. Offense only has to be good every once in awhile. In addition, every play on offense is a chance to win the game. The best you ever get on defense is a chance to not lose the game. Playing offense puts a dent in your sense of **Helplessness**.*

Oh Yeh. One last thing

What happened to Brad's business? Like most control freaks, he'd refused to

The End



**Okay - I've
got to have
**THIS
BOOK****



The Author - *Joe Anderson, PhD*



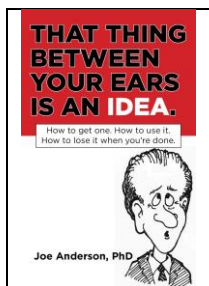
Joe has served as personal advisor and counselor to more than 60 CEOs, controlling over \$8 billion a year in sales and 3,500 employees - in large measure, via his chairmanship with Vistage - formerly known as The Executive Committee (TEC). He's been doing that job since 1995, along with occasional public speaking and a pretty fair amount of writing.

Prior to that, he successfully ran an organization himself, then went to grad school to find out why it had gone so well. He emerged with a PhD and taught for 10 years in some of the leading business schools in America; getting voted Professor of the Year at several of them. You can learn more at:

www.joeandersonphd.com

Other Books by Joe Anderson

THAT THING BETWEEN YOUR EARS IS AN IDEA: How to get one. How to use it. How to lose it when you're done

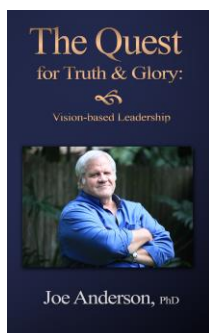


The average business needs a good, big, idea every 17.3 weeks – just to stay abreast of the competition. You know --- things like new products, processes and/or markets to pursue. But those are hard to come by because we’ve hemmed ourselves in by creating and enforcing a multitude of little ideas; like inventory systems, budgets, performance metrics, etc. So

we forget what a good, big one even smells like, much less how to actually have one. That’s where this book comes in. It will literally jump start your brain.

BUY THAT THING BETWEEN YOUR EARS

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH & GLORY: Vision-based Leadership



Leadership is not what you do, so much as, what you are. You have to *BE* the leader, not just act like one. And of all the things to be, the most important is to be the dreamer of dreams, the possessor of “the idea” --- because leadership is the act of getting a group to move from A to B --- and if you haven’t figured out where B is, the sheep just wander around randomly bumping into one another. Based on the lives of people

who changed their corner of the world, and thereby ours, for all eternity --- this book uncovers a handful of traits and actions that fuel and guide The Quest for Truth & Glory. The result is a handbook on how to change the world.

BUY THE QUEST