

In Search of Harmony: Becoming Your Own Hero at Work

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Chapter 4

Accepting the Call: A Commitment to Healing

Human pain does not let go of its grip at one point in time. Rather it works its way out of our consciousness over time. There is a season of sadness. A season of anger. A season of tranquillity. A season of hope.

—Robert Veninga

The unendurable is the beginning of the curve of joy.

—Djuna Barnes

If you wish the world to become loving and compassionate, become loving and compassionate yourself. If you wish to diminish fear in the world, diminish your own. These are the gifts that you can give.

—Gary Zukav

We all have our moment of disgust that brings us to a turning point. Enough is enough. We've been in the bottomless pit of the U-shaped curve too long and something has to give. Even well-adjusted healthy people acquire emotional baggage that needs attention. The time for reconciliation is now.

My own epiphany occurred in the middle of the night during a period of my life when I “should” have been the happiest but found myself angry or sad a good portion of the time. It was more than anger, it was rage; more than sadness—despair. No matter how hard I tried to will myself on to the next thing, the survival strategies that had served me well until then were nowhere to be found. I could not busy my way out of this one. When I awakened in the middle of the night, I was struck

with the strength and depth of my feelings, recognizing something was really wrong. I lay in my bed pondering the source of such enmity toward some vague but vast “everything.” Life wasn’t supposed to be like this. And I was bone tired of it. Weeping in my bed, I prayed, “Dear God, if you’ll show me the way, I’ll do the work.” I stepped out of the victim path, guided by a Divine hand, and took upon myself the artful restoration required.



If you can't claim it, you can't change it.

With new awareness comes responsibility to take action. If you don't take care of yourself, nobody else will.



*The responsibility for reconciliation is
more personal than organizational.*

Walking blindly at first, we attach ourselves to hope and the faith of others as we seek higher ground. Until now, I vacillated between thinking that if others would just behave differently everything would be okay and believing that if I just tried harder, everything would be all right.

A commitment to healing requires that we get very specific about what is eating us. Global condemnation keeps the hard cold truth about ourselves and others in abeyance, at arm's length, when we need to become bosom buddies.



If you can't name it, you can't change it.

“Suffering without understanding in this life is a heap worse than suffering when you have at least the grain of an idea what it’s all about.”¹ Getting clear about what’s bothering us—*really* bothering us—not what we’ve always told ourselves is the problem, is the choice of champions. It is often *not* the choice of people in the management and behavioral sciences. The focus is centered

on getting more out of others—what we can *do* for the company not what we can *become*. The topic of reconciliation is left to the religious domain, which often offers little insight into the complexities of organizational life.

Yet, without accessing the parts of ourselves we often hide out of shame, we continue to live a counterfeit life, opting for approval at the expense of wholeness. Our companies *need the best that we can be*— they need us to *bloom*, not just *survive*. Instead, we become spores. We intensify our efforts to pat down that which cries out to be uncovered, recovered. We hunker down, thinking we are conserving, preserving but instead are *wasting* because we are not *growing*.

I was tired of just *enduring*. My sorrow and my anger called me to thrive, not just survive. For me, reading more books, getting and giving more education and training, and “just trying harder” were no longer acceptable. I knew I needed help, a new process, a coach, a therapist, or someone wiser than I to help me unravel the confusion I felt. The next day, my “protector” arrived on my path, ready and able to help me in ways that I had not been helped before.

When we’re ready and willing to do the work God has in store for us, He provides the help. Surprisingly, the minute I sat down with my coach/counselor, there was an instant bond of trust that made my healing journey safe enough to continue. He called it “grief therapy.” I call it reconciliation.

The process of reconciliation is multifaceted, integrating and coming to terms with the mental (logic and rationality), physical, emotional (feelings), spiritual (soulful things), and social aspects of our lives at work. Body, mind, and spirit are so intertwined that all aspects must be dealt with if healing is to occur. Otherwise, when either part is missing, real, lasting change never occurs. We may make small improvements but never enduring ones. Professing otherwise only perpetuates our cynical reaction to organizational “flavor-of-the-month” and continuing dissatisfaction. Reconciliation at work begins with accepting responsibility for whatever mess we find ourselves in and finding ways to become *wiser*, to become whole, to increase our confidence, to avoid the minefields, and to help others do the same. Reconciliation requires

- Seeing past the pain, our own and others’;
- Accepting the reality of today’s worklife;
- Getting in touch with our feelings and responses to it;

- Confronting and coming to terms with the true nature of who we are and what we value;
- Grieving our losses as a prerequisite to developing new attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs;
- Forgiving ourselves and others;
- Taking a stand in appropriate ways;
- Setting personal boundaries relevant to the situation;
- Moving away from hopelessness and cynicism to hope and wisdom;
- Cultivating new sources of power to deal with adversity and organizational pain.

Then we are ready to proceed to the next stage of the hero's journey, now focused on increasing our wisdom, preventing adversity, and helping others. We do this by

- Acquiring interpersonal and organizational behavior skills;
- Redefining our careers to fit the new work reality of the 21st century;
- Developing resiliency strategies to cope with stress and to avoid despair;
- Sharing what we've learned by edifying others.

One of the hardest things in developing a strategy for dealing with adversity and organizational pain is that we have no forum for dealing with these issues. Ideally, we would have a safe small community of people who love and respect us with whom we could give and receive honest feedback about ourselves, who encourage us to experiment and take risks, allow us to talk freely and openly without censorship, and affirm the best within each of us. The goal of such a group would be to move toward dialogue.²

Dialogue is the most satisfying, healthy, and productive form of communication. Participants are united in mutual purpose, feeling free to express themselves openly, suspending their assumptions and opinions, avoiding defensiveness and the need to control others. Participants are not trying to

win, but to preserve the positive energy that is naturally abundant in everyone. Relationships are characterized by high levels of intimacy, exhibiting a balance in both risk and reward.

The value of such a group is that it becomes a microcosm of society or culture in which we work. Learning about ourselves is greatly accelerated, quickly creating opportunities for all the typical problems of the larger community to emerge and to be dealt with—the competitiveness, polarization, conformity due to fear of rejection, and adoption of specific role behaviors of dominance and submission. Self-defeating behaviors and destructive group dynamics would become readily apparent and understood. In such a group, we could sort out our problems, understanding better where the responsibility lies. Some things are clear-cut where there's no doubt about what to do. Other times, it's not so black and white. Like a light shining on a lost shiny object in the carpet helps distinguish it from its dark field, we also need ways to extract thoughts and feelings from the vast and deceptive recesses of our being—to hold our assumptions and conclusions up for examination.

Ancient and primitive civilizations understood that achieving desirable interpersonal behavior took an enormous amount of time and energy. They understood that people learned through rituals, symbols, and myths, devoting inordinate attention to the art of mentoring and conversation. The explicit comfort of the campfire has given way to the tacit relief of the information highway. Like most counterfeit solutions for intimacy, virtual reality is a poor substitute for the real thing. The power of the human experience, of someone helping another along the path he or she has just traveled cannot be over-emphasized. To improve our interpersonal skills, one of the most important things we can do is to work in a company that shares the value of mentoring and has the infrastructure to support meaningful dialogue.

Unfortunately, opportunities for this treasured kind of interaction are at best limited in the workplace and elsewhere in life. Instead, many people drown in a sea of irrelevance, struggling to distinguish between “pseudo events” and genuine ones. Sadly, most of the opportunities for making genuine connections are found only in group therapy situations. But why do we have to wait until we're “sick” to talk intimately with each other?

Imagine the value of meeting regularly with colleagues in a safe, reverent environment, united by mutual purpose, where the only goal is discovering what is real, with opportunity for constant observation and questioning from a different perspective. I can see no reason not to organize such a group for the sole (soul?) purpose of having meaningful dialogue; if not at work, then anywhere you are lucky (or blessed) enough to find a few interested people.

While this is ideal, there are other ways to provide new insight and understanding about ourselves. Once again, it's more *difficult*, not *impossible*. In the final analysis, the journey to becoming your own hero is unique and individual. With the help of the higher spirit that lies within, you are your own best coach—if you but muster all the courage you can find to reach out, take hold of the doorknob of your destiny, and take another step into the unknown “darkness of your own eyes.” We use our perception to make a course adjustment, we rely on the heroes before us to give us hope, we tap into new sources of power waiting to be discovered.

Perception through the mind: In retrospect. Looking back, examining situations that are not working out, we can begin to unravel whether our thoughts are coherent or not. We can track our emotions back to the thoughts (manifested in *conclusions*) that created them. We can ask, “What is truth in this situation?” “What is *real*?” For example, we may be led to question whether the immediate reaction was on target. If we had an argument with someone, our thoughts may lead us to immediately blame the other person, pushing away any personal responsibility for the problem. By reflecting honestly upon the more subtle aspects of the situation, things not readily apparent, we can correct the misconception before moving on to subsequent judgment.

Perception through the mind in retrospect requires reflecting—pondering deeply upon the use of language and its implications. What roles are we playing? Who is behind the mask? What can we learn of our true nature as we view ourselves in daily activities in the third person? Do the conclusions we draw fit with the observations? Are they based in fact or fiction? What is the data on which this generalization was made? Have we made up a story that fits our life script? Do we need to ask more questions, gather more data? Are we owning the fact that we create our own emotions by the conclusions we draw? Logical reasoning creates dialogue with our higher self which seeks expression and gives us a different perception of reality—if we are careful always to keep in mind that rationality is always limited, which we almost always forget in times of high emotion!

Perception through the spirit. Inside all of us is a dimension that supersedes all else—an energy source for a higher reality greater than the physical body, greater than our senses, greater than our innate tendencies. In our quieter, finer moments we all know it exists—a response from the heart that lifts us to become our best. The spiritual dimension is always present in our greatest achievements, providing inspiration, enthusiasm, and discipline to stand on higher ground.

When we deny the prompting toward goodness, we betray the expression of our best selves. The fruit of living a disciplined life and holding fast to virtuous principles, is an ability to perceive through the spirit. With a clear conscience, we become worthy and responsible to the still small voice available to all.

To become our own heroes at work requires diligent efforts in both arenas of mind and spirit. As human beings, we have an awesome power to free ourselves from the confining emotions created by our senses, by responding to our spiritual need to be good, do good, and see good—to do the right thing. We can learn to live with an emphasis on responsibility reflected in Viktor Frankl's categorical imperative: So live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now! Frankl writes,

It seems to me that there is nothing which would stimulate a man's sense of responsibility more than this maxim, which invites him to imagine first that the present is past and, second, that the past may yet be changed and amended. Such a precept confronts him with life's *finiteness* as well as the *finality* of what he makes out of both his life and himself.³

I don't want to trivialize the suffering of holocaust victims by comparing abuse in the workplace to it. Yet, Frankl's, Corrie ten Boom's, and Jacques Lusseyran's responses to the atrocities they encountered in the concentration camps vividly illustrate the last ultimate freedom we have is our ability to choose how we will respond to *any* given situation. Frankl's entire family (except his sister)—his father, mother, brother, and his wife—died in the camps or perished in the gas ovens. Stripped of everything of value to him, hungry, humiliated, choked with fear and rage at the injustice, he survived by finding meaning in the suffering:

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not. ⁴

Corrie ten Boom, a courageous Dutch heroine of the anti-Nazi underground, and her sister, Betsie, teach us much about finding joy in the midst of chaos—how to handle separation, to get along with less, to feel secure in the midst of insecurity, to forgive the unforgivable. She shows us how God uses our weaknesses to make us strong, how to love our enemies, and what to do when evil triumphs. Instead of becoming bitter, ten Boom used her memories as a way to throw a spotlight on

problems and decisions throughout her life. She said, “This is what the past is for! Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see.”⁵

In *And There Was Light*, Jacques Lusseyran maintains a love of life through everything: through the infirmity of blindness, the terrors of war, and even in Nazi prisons. There have been few lives in our century as extraordinary as that of Lusseyran. Blinded at the age of eight, Lusseyran organized and headed up the underground resistance movement, Les Volontaires de la Liberté, which began with fifty-two boys, all under twenty-one years old. The movement grew to six hundred within one year. Every person who wished to join the Volontaires was first sent to Jacques for acceptance or refusal. His senses were so keenly developed that he “saw” and heard everything with almost perfect awareness. He writes, “The light that shone in my head was so strong that it was like joy distilled. Somehow I became invulnerable. Then too I became infallible, or nearly . . .”⁶ Only once did he waver in his judgment, admitting a person of whom he was not totally sure, which proved to be the one person who betrayed them.

Lusseyran considered his blindness a great blessing throughout his life. Shortly after the accident that caused his blindness, Lusseyran became aware “of a radiance emanating from a place I knew nothing about . . . I saw light and went on seeing it though I was blind.” And “from that moment on,” he said, “blindness became for me a fascinating experience and the attempt to live in a new way.”⁷

This inner light described by Lusseyran was not merely a religious metaphor or euphoric mood, but “real light” that enabled him to discern shapes and colors, movement of people and things, but to literally see better than any sighted person. He writes with a clarity of awareness about his relationships and his environment far superior to most sighted writers I have known.

The central message of Lusseyran’s credo is twofold: “The first of these is that joy does not come from outside, for what ever happens to us, it is within. The second is that light does not come to us from without. Light is in us, even if we have no eyes.”⁸

The light Lusseyran saw was far beyond comprehension so continuous and intense that he sometimes doubted it. He tried unsuccessfully to make it go away:

Suppose it was not real, that I had only imagined it. Perhaps it would be enough to imagine the opposite or just something different, to make it go away. So I thought of testing it out and even of resisting it.

At night in bed, when I was all by myself, I shut my eyes, I lowered my eyelids as I might have done when they covered my physical eyes. I told myself that behind these curtains I would no longer see light. But light was still there, and more serene than ever, looking like a lake at evening when the wind has dropped. Then I gathered up all my energy and will power and tried to stop the flow of light, as I might have tried to stop breathing.

What happened was a disturbance, something like a whirlpool. But the whirlpool was still flooded with light. At all events I couldn't keep this up very long, perhaps only for two or three seconds. When this was going on I felt a sort of anguish, as though I were doing something forbidden, something against life. It was exactly as if I needed light to live—needed it as much as air. There was no way out of it. I was the prisoner of light. I was condemned to see.⁹

Even as an adult, Lusseyran continued to try this experiment with the same result, only that with passing years, the original source of the light had grown stronger.

At eight I came out of this experiment reassured, with the sense that I was being reborn. Since it was not I who was making the light, since it came to me from outside, it would never leave me. I was only a passageway, a vestibule for this brightness. The seeing eye was in me.¹⁰

While Lusseyran could not make the light go out, there were times when the light faded, almost to the point of disappearing. It happened every time he was afraid. Anger and impatience had the same effect.

Armed with this extraordinary insight, Lusseyran survived six months in the infamous prison of Fresnes and fifteen months in the Invalid's Block at Buchenwald, the German concentration camp for non-Jewish political prisoners. The extermination of prisoners there was carried out slowly, only after they had been exploited in the most vile and inhuman ways. Three hundred and eighty thousand men of a dozen or more nationalities died. One of thirty survivors of the shipment of two thousand men who were imprisoned at the same time, Lusseyran became known to his comrades as "the man who didn't die." He attributed his miraculous recovery to his knowledge that "fear is the real name of despair." He said,

Sickness had rescued me from fear. It had even rescued me from death. Let me say to you simply that without it (my illness) I never would have survived. From the first moments of sickness I had gone off into another world, quite consciously. I was not delirious . . . I still had the look of tranquility, more so than ever. That was the miracle.

I watched the stages of my own illness quite clearly. I saw the organs of my body blocked up or losing control one after the other, first my lungs, then my intestines, then my ears, all my muscles, and last of all my heart, which was functioning badly and filled me with a vast, unusual sound. I knew exactly what it was, this thing I was watching: my body in the act of leaving this world, not wanting to leave it right away, not even wanting to leave it all. I could tell by the pain my body was causing me, twisting and turning in every direction like snakes that have been cut in pieces.

Have I said that death was already there? If I have I was wrong. Sickness and pain, yes, but not death. Quite the opposite, life, and that was the unbelievable thing that had taken possession of me. I had never lived so fully before.¹¹

Extraordinary people like Frankl, ten Boom, Luseyran, and countless others prove to us that it is possible not only to change how we *act*, but how we *feel* when faced with adversity. When mired in situations where they could see no way out, instead of responding with disappointment, accusation, and blame, they killed the dragon within. Their freedom came in yielding their will to allow the light to subdue their natural inclinations.



*Only the blessed light can illuminate the darkness to
do what love requires.*

Tolstoy said, “To get rid of an enemy, one must love him.” We must see past the pain, our own and others’. Love is the greatest power tool of the workplace and is the least talked about of all management fundamentals (next to forgiveness.) It is the tool that works under any and all circumstances, the supreme enabler of heroism for us all.

Why is this? Regardless of the level we work at in our jobs, our accomplishments are largely determined by having a balance in getting the work accomplished and how well we get along with people. Working well with others (interpersonal skills) requires cooperation, teamwork, loyalty, understanding, tolerance, and trust. These qualities are not just about being nice—they are essential qualities of work effectiveness. What are these qualities other than showing love to each other? We create our own harvest through a commitment to mutual purpose, consistent respectful behavior reflecting that purpose, and staying in dialogue until mutual outcomes are achieved. We reap what we sow. (AKA “the Law of the Hog” in chapter 3 when you sow bad seeds!)



Mutuality matters.

There are two social rules found in every culture and society. The first is the incest taboo and the second is reciprocity. To *reciprocate* means to give or feel in return. This principle of mutual exchange makes it imperative that we treat each other kindly. Indeed, this most basic of all leadership principles is found in every major religion, known in Christianity as the Golden Rule:

1. **Baha’i:** “It is our wish and desire that every one of you may become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind. Beware lest you prefer yourself above your neighbors.”
—Baha’u’llah, Gleanings, 315
2. **Buddhism:** “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.”
—Undana-varqa:518
3. **Christianity:** “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”
—Luke 6:31
4. **Confucianism:** “Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.”
—Analects, XV, 23
5. **Hinduism:** “This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after.”
—The Mahabharata
6. **Islam:** “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”
—Sunnah
7. **Judaism:** “What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary.”
—Talmud, Shabbat 31a

8. **Taoism:** “The good man ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to rejoice over their excellence; to help them in their straits; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way.”
—Thai-shang, 3
9. **Zoroastrianism:** “That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.”
—Dadistan-I Dinik, 94:5

What else is mutuality except being altruistic, benevolent, responding to the biblical admonition to be “charitable” or to show love? If love is absent, healthy debate is impossible. If love is absent, contention becomes so disruptive we cannot know what truth is. And to make good decisions we must have as much truth as possible. Too much dissonance destroys our capacity to work together; too little creates stagnation. In Professor Ritchie’s language, “The limits of contention ought to be tight; the limits of difference ought to be wide.” He explains:

Contention never implies differences in interpretation. It never implies an enthusiastic debate over how you apply concepts. It implies a destructiveness in terms of the basic purpose for coming together, which is to love, to serve, to build, to grow, to develop, to learn, to explore, to take risks, to make mistakes, and to translate all these into eternal learning experiences.¹²

And to make money? Must we throw respect and concern out the window all in the name of profit? Ritchie suggests the art of providing counsel (also council) as a condition of “nondestructive, noncontentious differences.” He says,

In an autocracy, power rests with the sovereign; in a democracy, power rests with people; in a council, power rests with truth . . . “Sweet” council implies a process of trust, faith, search, and debate; but not condemnation, intimidation, rejection, and contention.¹³

Putting Love to Work at Work

Within the context of victimism and heroism at work, reflect upon the biblical admonition to love. The author of these words had a great deal of experience with persecution, intimidation, and rejection both as a giver and receiver. Paul was deeply involved with what today would be considered a “hate-group” and was well-versed in issues such as multicultural diversity, discrimination because of race and religion, false accusations, unjust imprisonment, and violation of

his fundamental “human rights.” He had broad experience in dealing with the volatile issues of the day from both sides of the victim/hero continuum, using both extremes in coping styles. Paul urged the Corinthians to strive for the very traits he had so fully developed in himself:

Here we have the noble Paul, who had suffered much from his contemporaries—Paul, who had been tortured with beatings, who had suffered incarceration in many prisons; Paul, who had received 200 stripes across his back, who had been beaten with rods; Paul, who had been stoned and left for dead, and who had three times been shipwrecked and had struggled many hours in the water; Paul, who had suffered from robbers and had been hidden from his pursuers and had escaped in a basket over the wall—this Paul who had suffered so much at the hands of others came near the end of his life, with a forgiving heart and said: “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.”¹⁴

Yet Paul loved! And he knew from experience that it was the only thing that really works—all of the time. (The King James version reads “charity”, for which I have substituted the word “love”):

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing.

*Love suffereth long, and is kind;
Love envieth not;
Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
Doth not behave itself unseemly,
Seeketh not her own,
Is not easily provoked,
Thinketh no evil;
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, Love, these three: but the greatest of these is Love.¹⁵

Love simplifies the difficult task of problem-solving in the workplace. Almost everyone has a training manual from which to refer for guidance. It’s a portable, immensely user-friendly framework for problem identification and analysis. What else do you have control over and always

at your disposal? Its usage propels emotions and actions outward, glorifying all of life, including the despicable. Love *is* the greatest thing in the world—including the workplace.

The preceding scripture makes me feel guilty. When I'm hurt, I don't feel like loving anybody. I want to hurt back! Where is love when I need it the most? Which is precisely the point: when *I* need it the most. It is when we most need to change that we have the most doubt about our ability to do so.

Love Analyzed at Work

The Greatest Thing in the World, Henry Drummond's classic analysis of love first published in 1884, likens the elements of Love to light:

As you have seen a man of science take a beam of light and pass it through a crystal prism, as you have seen it come out on the other side of the prism broken up into its component colors—red, and blue, and yellow, and violet, and orange, and all the colors of the rainbow—so Paul passes this, Love, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements. And in these few words we have what one might call the Spectrum of Love, the analysis Love. Will you observe what its elements are? Will you notice that they have common names; that they are virtues which we hear about every day; that they are things which can be practiced by every man in every place in life; and how, by a multitude of small things and ordinary virtues, the supreme thing, the *summum bonum*, is made up.¹⁶

Just as light is composed of the five colors of the rainbow, nine ingredients comprise the Spectrum of Love described by Paul:

Patience . . . “Love suffereth long.” Drummond writes, “Patience is the *attitude* of Love; Love passive, waiting to begin; not in a hurry; calm . . . Love suffers long; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things. For love understands, and therefore waits.” Love is meek. The impersonal quest for *efficiency* in the workplace is antithetical to the spiritual quality of *patience*—at least on the surface. If patience is the hallmark of interpersonal relationships, the end result is superior and efficient action in the long run. However, what we see at work is getting things done at any price, the consequences of which are workers working wounded, becoming cynical and indifferent, and doing payback. The aftermath of impatience brings discouragement, and left unchecked, grows into symptoms of despair, hopelessness, and unresolved contention.

Kindness . . . “And is kind.” Love is active, doing good things, knowing there is a difference between *trying to please* and *giving pleasure*. Trying to please waits for a response; in giving pleasure the response desired is in the giving itself. The Sufis advise us to speak only after our

words have managed to pass through three gates. At the first gate, we ask ourselves, “Are these words true?” If so, we let them pass on; if not, back they go. At the second gate, we ask, “Are they necessary?” At the last gate, we ask, “Are they kind?”¹⁷ Is it real, is it relevant, is it reverent? Kindness instills confidence, promotes risk-taking, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress not just for the moment they occurred but long after. In the words of Mother Theresa, “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are endless.”

Generosity . . . “Love envieth not,” expresses Love in competition with others. Whatever work we do, there will always be others doing the same kind of work and many doing it better. Love resists the temptation to resent others’ good fortune. Could it be they need it more than you? The attitude that *less is often more* combats the jungle morality of survival of the fittest where winning is everything: less greed, less control, less ego, less selfishness.

Humility . . . “Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” Love puts a seal upon our lips, never keeping score, resisting arrogance and pride, helping us forget what we’ve done. Humility happens much like a soft dew imperceptibly falling upon our souls when no one is watching. The healing balm of humility is the liniment for learning, creating wisdom and fortunate action. An attitude of learning, constantly seeking new information, and embracing insight, nurtures the resiliency latent within each of us and helps us not only to survive whatever comes our way, but to do so triumphantly.

Unfortunately, an attitude of arrogance is one of the key constraints to respect in the workplace. In my research, superior arrogant attitudes ranked third in frequency of abusive behaviors and fourth in perceived harmfulness. People who think they know it all are closed to the influence of others and deny opportunities for others to have meaningful involvement. Those workers who are able to “seek first to understand before being understood” have more influence with co-workers, but more importantly, *they* learn more.¹⁸ The practice of asking searching questions and giving honest answers brings new insight and the ability to predict future events. Humility helps us sense that trouble is lurking, attend to the problem, or remove ourselves from the line of fire.

Courtesy . . . “Doth not behave itself unseemly.” Demonstrates Love in society, politeness in the small everyday occurrences. “It is in the shelter of each other” that we live at work, doing the little things that matter most, but good manners are often checked at the door of the workplace. If rudeness reigns, how can we feel safe? William James wrote, “I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or

like the capillary oozing of water, which, if given time, will rend the hardest monuments of pride.”¹⁹ James understood that we are all connected in profound ways but nurtured through what seems inconsequential.

Unselfishness . . . “Seeketh not her own.” Love refuses to get ahead at the expense of others. Never rejoices in the misfortune of others, but responds with empathy and compassion. From success we gain many things, but it does not compare with the joy of sacrifice, the fruit of love in action. The times when we exercise the higher right of giving up our rights are the times we *are* the change we want to see at work.

Good Temper. . . “Is not easily provoked.” What embitters life more than people who are like a thunder cloud waiting to storm? An intemperate nature is a peephole to loveless character, the absence of the attributes of patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, and unselfishness. The stresses and strains of our lives pull us from the hero path down the garden path of excuses for behaving badly. To restore balance, we need to recognize the physical and mental symptoms of stress and adopt positive alternatives for managing and coping with stress productively. (See Chapter 8.)

Guilelessness. . . “Thinketh no evil.” Trusts others. Doesn’t prejudge. Gives the benefit of the doubt. Is not suspicious, imputes no motive, sees the bright side. Believes the best and gets it. The choice to abandon skillful deception and pretence—to willingly be present to others—places love in our character and conveys mutual intention and respect, both of which are necessary for success at work in the long-term.

Sincerity. . . “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” Love is not caught up in putting the best “spin” on things. Isn’t locked into tradition. Lets the truth do the cutting when cutting needs to be done. Frankness, directness, and candor in communication takes the guess work out of where we stand with others, creating a feeling of dependability. Sincerity gives us comfort in determining what is authentic, valid, and congruent—all of which are essential to good decision-making and interpersonal harmony. Hypocrisy really fools no one for very long, for in the end, the betrayer is the loser.

I can already hear the chorus from many of you:

“If I wanted a sermon, I’d go to church! Give me something practical.”

“Business is about the bottom line. It’s win-lose, beat or get beaten.”

“Apparently you haven’t worked with the kind of people I work with.”

To which I say, “Sorry, *there is no other way.*” In the final analysis, love is the only thing that lasts and works. The most important principle in becoming your own hero at work is as simple as that. Emerson said, “This [love] is the one remedy for all ills. We must [love] and at once the impossible becomes possible . . . Let our affection flow out to our fellows; [and] it would operate in a day the greatest of all revolution . . . Love would put a new face on this weary . . . world.”

What I don’t want to imply is that any of us can be perfect at doing love. Each of us is at a different level in fitting these attributes into our character. There is just as much variance in each other’s ability as there are people. I *am* suggesting that heroes at work are at least on the path moving in the right direction, having an accurate awareness of their colors on the spectrum of love. They know when they are making self-defeating detours. They are committed to dealing with difficult co-workers in ways that will not derail their own commitments to love. The task here is to get better at putting love to work at work.



*Love is a verb; it’s more about doing
and less about feeling.*

The only way to get good at it is to practice. Make a commitment to practice love in the daily stream of life at work. Label those people who possess it. Be vigilant in knowing when you are caught without it. Learn the resentment attributes that tell you love is absent. Make love a part of your daily objectives, looking upon it as a spectrum of light filling your mind, body, and spirit with radiance that will transform you and all you encounter.

Learn about Your Tendencies

Each of us has a natural style or preference we most often use in dealing with others. Under stress, we have the opportunity to show the best and worst in ourselves. Becoming aware of the kinds of strategies and behaviors we *habitually* use without thinking about it can help get us back on track when we misstep. What is your “native tongue,” the style you use when you are under pressure? The chart below demonstrates the struggle to find *balance*—to resist getting *stuck* in behaviors that do not serve us or others well:

Continuum of Responses to Adversity

	False: Flight Reaction	True: Hero Action	False: Fight Reaction
Victim	Despair Hopelessness Apathy Self-condemnation: blame yourself Stress out: be drained	Grief Forgiveness Action Self-confidence: accept responsibility Resilient/adaptive	Anger/rage Revenge Paranoia Self-entitlement: blame others Burn out: be consumed
Hero	Avoid change: preserve self Withdrawing Self-pity Mistrust Cynic Make tacit assumptions Distant/antisocial Reflection w/o action Trapped by fear: hide from the dragon	Initiate change: transform self Giving/sharing Self-respect Trust / mutuality Optimist Open, candid dialogue Friendly / caring Balanced action Guided by the Spirit: control the dragon	Inflict change: force others to change Taking Self-justification Take advantage Opportunist Make overt accusations Manipulative Action without reflection Lust for power: become the dragon

Where are you stuck? How are you deceiving yourself about your true nature and identity? Where is your courage lacking in your change efforts? Based upon disappointments in the past, define the situations in which you are most likely to “have your strings pulled” and then set specific ground

rules and make commitments to improve in problem areas. If you don't know, ask for feedback. Trusted colleagues at work and home can give us a mirror image of what our behavior is like—behavior we are often unaware of. While most of us know some of our weaknesses and natural tendencies that wreak havoc in our lives, we also have some blind spots. For example, if we have a personal tendency toward wanting to be center stage, we might ask, "I'm aware that I have a tendency to interrupt others and would like some feedback about when I'm doing it. Would you let me know when you see me interrupting others?" Or, "I have a tendency to become withdrawn when I'm around very assertive individuals. If you notice me clamming up in the meeting, would you quietly nudge me?"

Our resentment quotient is a good gauge to our love and hate status, fluctuating at various levels of accusing emotions on the Victim/Hero Continuum. Self-pity, anger, martyrdom, suspicion, impatience, and self-righteousness are a few of these feelings that act as a "victim alarm" that we are getting entrapped in a bad situation. We do not actually say these words, we have only to feel them. We unwittingly and unconsciously act out blaming emotions and attitudes, setting up a self-justifying story that Brigham Young University professor Terry Warner calls "wordless lies."²⁰ Warner teaches hard doctrine: though we believe it is others' mistreatment of us that leads us to resent them, it is the self-betrayer's lie. The truth is that we often resent others because of our mistreatment of them! When we fail to respond in love, we make ourselves feel better by creating a story that makes the other person look worse to justify our own unloving responses. In other words, if love is present, if we respond to the light within us, we don't have a problem. If love is present, we are not victims. If love is present, we have the power to liberate ourselves from the adversity of the moment. Anytime we say, "He asked for it!" you can be alerted to rationalizing, defensive behavior, not benevolent proactive behavior.

Most of us are guilty to one degree or another in these self-destructive strategies. The danger lies in their becoming a *pattern* of behavior. Our ability to recognize our weak areas and underlying patterns of behavior is the first step toward correction. The first step to change is awareness. The goal of the following exercises is to turn our backs on every indulgence, to move toward discipline of every kind, and to sacrifice the indulgence of the moment for the hope of tomorrow. We become our own heroes at work by focusing on the attributes of courage and nobility of purpose. "You can transcend all negativity when you realize that the only power it has over you is your belief in it. As you experience this truth about yourself you are set free."²¹

The combination of the rose and the fire is a powerful metaphor for keeping our focus. The rose is an archetype for the heart or love; fire signifies a refining process. Imagine a sterling silver vase,

tarnished by the exposure to the dirt and grime of the world. Some who see the vase would no doubt say, “What a piece of junk!” Not knowing its value, they may even throw it away. Others know that underneath the blackened exterior is precious metal. Persistent polishing with a gentle abrasive restores the brilliant shine to the vase. Because silver is a soft metal easily damaged by harsh abrasives, care must be taken to avoid damaging the vase. Think what steel wool would do? Through patient persistent effort, the friction slowly erases (burns?) the tarnish away, restoring the beauty that was always there. Whether recognized or not, the vase is still silver; its value is not dependent upon whether or not anyone acknowledges it or even polishes it. It just *is*.

We are much like the silver vase. Though discolored and diminished by too harsh and incorrect judgments, underneath the facade is inestimable worth. Seeking truth provides the gentle abrasive needed to develop shining, loving attitudes.

Begin by assessing in the section on love where you are on the continuum of the nine attributes of love described above. Then, take your self-analysis a step further by identifying where you are on the Victim/Hero Continuum. The temptation will be to skip over this exercise because it makes us uncomfortable: we carry too much guilt already about our inadequacy. But this isn't about blame: it's about creating new awareness and assuming responsibility for ourselves within a framework of truth tempered with mercy for ourselves and others.



*Without new insights that come from honest appraisal,
the weeds in our lives drop their seeds, gaining an even
greater stronghold.*

Continuum of Responses to the Challenge to Love Others

Flight Reactions	Hero Actions	Fight Reactions
<i>Unbelief</i> in positive change Belief in inertia / status quo	<i>Patience</i> in pursuing change Long-term effectiveness focus	<i>Impatience</i> in pursuing change Short-term efficiency focus
<i>Indifference</i> : I don't care — you do not matter to me.	<i>Kindness</i> : I am your friend and will not hurt you.	<i>Paternalism</i> : I know what's best for you, like it or not.
<i>Resentment/envy</i> : I want what you have.	<i>Generosity</i> : I will celebrate your achievements with you.	<i>Power plays</i> : I will take credit for your achievements.
<i>Self-denegration/pity</i> : I am unworthy and pathetic, and so are you.	<i>Humility</i> : I am more interested in the truth than in myself. Slow to judge others.	<i>Self-delusion</i> : I am a legend in my own mind. Only stupid people disagree with me.
<i>Coldness</i> : I don't have time or energy for your needs.	<i>Courtesy</i> : I care about your feelings and comfort.	<i>Rudeness</i> : You will interact on my terms, or not at all.
<i>Defensiveness</i> : I protect what I have; sacrifice is loss.	<i>Unselfishness</i> : I will sacrifice for the greater good.	<i>Opportunism</i> : I will sacrifice when it serves my interests.
<i>Silence</i> : Sharing is risky, I prefer cynicism and safety.	<i>Good Temper</i> : I choose to be cheerful and positive.	<i>Violence</i> : I am explosive, unpredictable and inconsistent.
<i>Paranoid</i> : Assumes the worst, projects own fears.	<i>Guileless</i> : Assumes the best, gives benefit of a doubt.	<i>Mistrusting</i> : Projects own dishonesty onto others.
<i>Insincerity</i> : Situational ethics: accepts whatever truths are comfortable and convenient.	<i>Sincerity</i> : Loves the truth, and will defend it from lies. Accepts responsibility to live and model personal values.	<i>Insincerity</i> : Opportunistic ethics: truth is what you shape it to be; it is merely functional and can be discarded at will.

Victim/Hero Continuum of Resentment

<u>Victim</u>								<u>Hero</u>
(Resentment)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(Love)
Easily offended	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Forgiving
Avoidance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Responsibility
Indulgence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sacrifice
Jealousy/envy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Generosity
Unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Relevant
Limited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Boundless
Rights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mercy
Pride	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Humility
Suspicion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trust/Guilelessness
Disillusionment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hope
Dependent/Helpless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Powerful
Self-centered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Community
Frustration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Peace
Martyr	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Joy
Anger	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Kindness
Fear	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confidence
Indifference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concern
Impatient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Amiable

Learn about the Tendencies of People Who Have Been Abused

“Let us not run from the unattractiveness of a shattered soul.”²² Most survivors of abuse exhibit mystifying behaviors, perceptions, and feelings that require insight and compassion so that we may become a part of the solution instead of the problem. If we automatically judge difficult people as having “character deficiencies” (though this is sometimes the case), we may judge them in error. When we understand the underlying cause, their behavior is totally rational and logical. Although we do not always understand it, all behavior has purpose.

For obvious reasons we are not qualified nor is it our responsibility to become therapists to individuals who exhibit troublesome behavior. Yet, it is helpful to recognize a clustering of the characteristics for what they are and to learn the skill of validating viewpoints and feelings that are different from our own. With new awareness about the consequences of adversity and abuse, we are better able to make compassionate responses that heal instead of punitive ones that harm. To do otherwise exacerbates our difficulties for others, the organization, and ourselves.

Those who have experienced abuse or trauma early in life learn to survive by developing certain patterns of behavior or actual responses to the violence or trauma, responses which carry over to adult life. Although these roles are no longer useful, these self-defeating survival strategies continue to derail workers from their goals. Innocently, workers get caught in a vicious cycle of self-defeating behaviors, repeating the same mistakes over and over, from one job to the next. Family therapist John Bradshaw explains why:

These [adult] behaviors are the survival behaviors which were the actual responses to the violence [in the home]. As the child from the dysfunctional family grows up, these survival behaviors continue even though they are now disconnected from the original source of distress. These *survival behaviors feel normal since they are the patterns once used every day of his early life in order to survive*. As an adult, they are not only unnecessary, they are actually unhealthy. While once they were protective, now they are destructive.²³

These defenses may become more detrimental than the original trauma. In the competitive world of business, it can be a nightmare. Similar stressors encountered at work often trigger fear, anxiety, depression, anger, and/or other emotional responses similar to those experienced in childhood. The result is *compounded* pain. Also, many survivors of childhood trauma experience post-traumatic stress syndrome—a condition similar to the post-war trauma of veterans. For many of these workers, the pain is far worse than combat because as children there was no escape and no end to it.

Carolyn's Story

I grew up in a home out of control. My stepfather lived in a rage, constantly spewing out his venom against my mother, my brothers and sisters, and me. The youngest in the family, I received the brunt of his ridicule and abuse. Once when I was twelve, he beat me with the buckle end of his belt, leaving scars on my back for three weeks. I ran away to my aunt's home but had to go back when my mom came for me. It was always the same—big blowup, my stepfather would leave (or Mom would make him leave), after a few days or hours Mom would cry and tell me I was the most important thing in her life, but she had to let him come back. The utter betrayal which I felt almost destroyed me, each time sinking me into a despair so profound the only thing I knew to do was to hate. With each occurrence, my hatred matched the betrayal, the anguish of which blackened my young life to a self unrecognizable.

My new life mission was to be as different from my mother as humanly possible. When she was afraid, I had courage; when she was weak, I was strong; when she was intimidated, I was assertive. When she was dependent, I stood on my own two feet. I became the protector, the savior, the rescuer. I became the Mom. You could always count on me—even if it killed me. And it nearly did.

My life role of protector of the underdog followed me wherever I went. Almost automatically, I was attracted to victims and they to me, as if we both wore some kind of common mark upon our souls. Ironically, I also attracted problems because where a victim is, a brute is not far away. I needed trouble, though certainly not consciously, to feel good about myself. It was the only way I knew of finding value in myself, of being loved and accepted. With a sense of moral superiority, I simply and courageously sprung into action to do the hard things—to walk where others were too smart or scared to tread.

But it was all a lie. I learned to live this lie at first quite innocently as a child—a part of the unconscious or undeliberate conspiracy to justify the pitiful existence in which we lived. My mother didn't love me more than anything in the world. She lived a lie too; she believed that she was trapped by the travesty of her own childhood. And I wasn't courageous, self-reliant, and bold. Inside I was as frightened, helpless, and unlovable as she.

I didn't just pretend to feel one way, I believed things were as I viewed them. Often shrouded in the cloak of justice, I was supersensitive and easily offended, quick to find fault with others. I was always embroiled in controversy, continually wounded by my coworkers because they weren't "there for me" the way I was for them. Small missteps felt like major betrayals. To my utter amazement and disappointment, the long line of my own "victims" responded in kind by distancing themselves from me. In reality, I unwittingly set up continual betrayal because I acted like a victim. Not grounded in reality, I produced the very thing I fought so hard to prevent.

For many years, the collusion learned in childhood continued to wreak havoc in my life. My unresolved resentment of betrayal in my childhood continued to undermine my career as well as my personal relationships. Eventually, after much soul searching I began to see the pattern. I'm still working on changing my thought

patterns. Yet, I feel like a huge boulder has been lifted from my soul. I don't need to pretend anymore, and I don't need to rescue everybody.

For many workers who grew up with family chaos, the coping strategies of childhood are reinforced through choices made in the course of their lives, such as selecting marriage partners or careers that re-evoke their childhood emotional responses. Unwittingly, an adverse chain reaction or vicious cycle is set into place perpetuating behavior that results in checkered or lackluster careers:

You have to understand that I was raised with a mother whose very behavior was inappropriate. I mean, anything you said or did got a response that made no sense. I learned to tune out. I didn't "hear" other people's abusive behavior. Even now, after years of therapy, I still have to work very hard to pay close attention to what people say because otherwise I won't recognize when I'm being exploited. My business partner treated me horribly, both in word and deed, and for a long time I never saw it. By the time I realized what was happening, the guy had just taken over the company. I was shut out of day-to-day operations. All our clients wanted to deal only with him, not with me. Finally I sold him my interest in the company. Now I'm thinking of going back to school and becoming a social worker. I really think I could be of help to people.²⁴

Being emotionally competent is the basis for learning the practical skills necessary to do well at work. However, people who are survivors of abuse and trauma have little opportunity to master these skills. Research by Daniel Goleman on the superiority of emotional intelligence as opposed to IQ shows that from entry-level jobs to top executive positions, the single most important factor is managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively. According to Goleman, "At the heart of this competence are two abilities: empathy, which involves reading the feelings of others, and social skills, which allow handling those feelings artfully."²⁵ Emotional competence is based upon self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and adeptness in relationships. While having these attributes does not necessarily guarantee a worker will have learned the emotional competencies that matter for work, they have an excellent *potential* to learn them. Goleman explains,

A person might be highly empathic, for example, and yet not have learned the skills based on empathy that translate into superior customer service, top-flight coaching or mentoring, or the ability to bring together a diverse work team. The parallel in music would be someone with perfect pitch, say, who also had lessons in singing, and so became a superb operatic tenor.²⁶

To work with emotional intelligence, Goleman identifies twenty-five abilities that cluster under five categories:

Self-Awareness: emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence;

Self-Regulation: self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation;

Motivation: achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism;

Empathy: service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, political awareness;

Social Skills: influence, communication, leadership, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, team capabilities.²⁷

While people who are survivors of abuse and trauma in their family of origin may have an increased *desire* to overcome their deficits, they are often unable to perform at the level the situation demands. It takes tremendous effort and understanding along with a healing process that may seem impossible.

A good place to start in increasing our emotional intelligence is to become aware of some symptoms of trauma and abuse and their impact upon our effectiveness at work. The following symptoms profile some general tendencies found in survivors of abuse. Obviously, not all survivors of abuse fit this profile. Some survivors of abuse may become withdrawn or reclusive, offering minimal contributions at work. Some are well adjusted despite what they have encountered.

Exceptional Need of Acceptance and Approval. Since survivors of abuse lacked sufficient emotional or physical support, they may become extremely dependent upon their jobs for a sense of self-worth and identity. They appear to “overreact” to normal disappointments encountered at work. They are self-critical, setting abnormally demanding, self-imposed performance standards, and judge themselves without mercy. Often loyal to a fault, they stay in destructive work situations longer than is healthy. Coaching, counseling, and disciplining survivors can be especially difficult for both manager and work associates. Survivors often vacillate between extremely emotional defensiveness and trying hard to appease the manager. Survivors find performance appraisals difficult, showing an inability to accept criticism and exaggerating performance or going to the opposite extreme by minimizing contributions.²⁸

Despite the difficulties in interpersonal relationships, survivors of abuse are frequently our hardest workers. Often perfectionistic, they revise reports or push deadlines out on projects. As

overachievers or workaholics, they are often ostracized by co-workers for being “rate busters.” They feel “different” from others and are often lonely and isolated. Survivors are confused about why they do not seem to gain acceptance when they work so hard at doing a good job. This isolation leads to hostility and resentment, emotions they try not to show at work. They may “numb out,” but the underlying feeling is, “You're O. K. I'm not O. K. and I'm mad as hell about it.”

Difficulty in Trusting Personal Feelings. Because survivors of abuse are confused about their identity, they have difficulty knowing what “normal” behavior is. They tend to vacillate between extreme rationalism and emotionalism. Since boundaries in their family were or are confusing or nonexistent, they often overstep or fail to set appropriate boundaries at work. Or, they may be reluctant to act on their hunches for fear they will “mess up.” Survivors have an inordinate need for feedback from others, often needing reassurance that what they are doing has merit.

Difficulty in Trusting Others. Survivors of abuse are on guard and anxious, often hypervigilant, fearful, and easily depressed; they startle and panic easily. Survivors are often called “control freaks,” yet, this inordinate need to control people and situations is often masked by their being “helpful.” Their difficulty in making sound judgments about who is trustworthy often creates problems in communication, delegation, interpersonal problem-solving, and control functions. By expecting abuse to occur, they often create it when none may be present. (Often naive or idealistic about present danger, the reverse is also true.) Survivors are more likely to commit what psychologists call the “fundamental attribution error,” the automatic assignment of a problem to the evil or selfish motive of others. Their beliefs, observations, and conclusions remain as untested “facts,” thus creating great obstacles in developing supportive relationships. Abuse victims often mistake bad *strategy* with bad *motive*. By viewing the world through the eyes of abuse and victimization, employees enact or create their own environment.²⁹ (What they see is what they get.)

The intimate nature of working on self-managed work teams can create high levels of anxiety for survivors of abuse. They are often the most resistant to the change efforts. Under normal circumstances, trust affects every facet of organizational life. Having spent a lifetime looking over their shoulders, for survivors it can be a nightmare.

Emotional Dishonesty. If personal feelings and the actions of others cannot be trusted, pretending behaviors accelerate. Politics proliferate; the social mask protects. Remember the quotation given earlier by R. D. Laing:

They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I shall break the rules and they will punish me. I must play the game, of not seeing that I play the game.³⁰

Emotional honesty is difficult even under ideal circumstances. It takes enormous courage to remain true to our values. The adversity we encounter in the workplace tests our moral and ethical bearings dozens of times each day. The nature of our character is revealed minute by minute, the sum total of dozens of interactions with our co-workers. Without a solid foundation developed in childhood, the *inconsistency* of responses causes others to mistrust our motives and intentions. Doing the right thing instead of the “politically correct” thing is more difficult, requiring constant examination of values, behaviors, attitudes, and motives. Yet, none of us can play the game well enough or long enough to deceive others over the long haul. Most important, it is who we are that matters most. Thank God, it's just too difficult to keep up the act, and we're all too smart for deception to last.

My experience tells me that training and development people cannot “train these behaviors out” very easily. Survival behaviors are hard to give up. Bradshaw explains:

They are old friends who served us well. We did survive. But we survived by developing a kind of *power* that resulted from sacrificing ourselves. We learned to control people by becoming Caretakers, by being Stars, Heroes, and Heroines, by being Lost Children, by being Perfect, by being the Problem, or the Rebel, or the Scapegoat, by being Our Parent's Parent, by being Little Parents, etc.³¹

By taking on these roles, survivors of abuse in the family gave up their own reality and survived by abandoning their true selves—by giving up their true identity. Giving up these roles is tantamount to giving up one's self. In our families we unwittingly learn to collude with each other to justify not living up to our best selves, creating mysterious and confusing dynamics that make us believe things are one way when they are another.

What role did you play in your family? Pretend you have a “dress-up” box of props that portray the role you played. Take the props out one by one that describe your function in your family. Were you a Caretaker, Peacemaker, Warrior, Protector, Lost Child, Scapegoat, Little Parent, Perfect, Black Sheep, the Clown, Mom's Mom or Dad's Dad, Miss or Mister Fixit, the Smart One? (Or maybe you were just You!) Now, put the props back in the box. Next, think of your role at work and repeat the same exercise by taking the props out that best describe the role you play most of the time. Are they the same or different? Are the roles you are now playing as an adult working for you, or are you still carrying around childhood baggage that is no longer helpful or appropriate?

The impact of family roles upon workplace roles is not exclusive to families where abuse is frequent. Even in families where abuse or trauma is infrequent, the power of family roles upon the workplace is significant. Family therapist Carlfred Broderick says “strong bond systems,” such as those of the family, will override “weak bond systems” found in the workplace.³²

Is it any wonder organizational change strategies often produce dismal results?

Pen, Paper, Power

For the past 10 years I have used confessional writing as a tool for my personal healing. No one told me to do it; it just felt right. In many respects, this book is a product of my need to clarify and reconcile my losses. The catharsis has served me well, cleaning out my “emotional junkyard” of a lifetime of trauma. But my need is much deeper. As I sit looking at a blank screen, the discipline of writing forces me to attempt to share the meaning of my life, its tragedy and its glory. Writing gives me clarity about who I am, what I want, what I believe, what God’s purpose is for my life. In a way I am providing the structure for helping God and me to co-create my own story—finding truth in a creative way. As I write, He is writing on the “tablet of my heart” the things I need to learn to the point of clarity so they can withstand the examination of the world. The gifts I need at every juncture of the road are always given: the right book I need to read, the right quotation jumps out of nowhere, a problem to which I seek answers suddenly appears in several places—often within a short period of time—confirming to me the wisdom of my search. An “unseen reality” draws others to care about my work, lending support and encouragement when my faith grows dim.

But the gifts are not free. In *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, author Madeleine L’Engle writes,

The moment of inspiration does not come to someone who lolls around expecting the gift to be free. It is no giveaway. It is the pearl for which we have to pay a great price, the price of intense loneliness, the price of that vulnerability which often allows us to be hurt; the less readily understandable price of hurting those we love.... If we’re given a gift—and the size of the gift, great or small, is irrelevant—then most of us must serve it, like it or not.³³

Writing clarifies one’s gifts. The April 26, 1999 issue of *Newsweek* magazine documents that confessional writing can be good for you.³⁴ This kind of writing is far more therapeutic than anyone ever knew. People who write about their most upsetting experiences not only feel better emotionally, they are physically healthier. A study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* proved that keeping a journal reduces symptoms of asthma and

rheumatoid arthritis. Asthma patients improved their lung capacity by 19 percent, arthritis symptoms got better by 28 percent. In other research, studies show writing created small reductions in blood pressure and “increased the level of disease-fighting lymphocytes circulating in the bloodstream.”

The process of expressive or confessional writing allows participants to literally read their own minds and hearts. Structuring time to get “unstuck” from binding and self-limiting, unfinished business of the past and present also helps remove the chokehold that fear can gain over our lives as we look toward the future. The conclusion of the article fits with my personal experience: writing is a powerful tool for rewriting the tablets of the heart. Start where your instincts tell you to start. What is important is to commit yourself to following truth where it leads you:

Interview yourself. Viewing yourself in the third person, get a note pad and ask yourself questions and answer them uncensored. (Don’t worry about what you say or the way you say it because no one will see your answers except you. Tear it up and throw it away if you like.) Ask, “What are you feeling?” “When have you felt like this before?” “Why did this hurt so much?” “What single word describes the violation?” “What is the connection to the present?” “How is this current situation the same?” “How is it different?” Say, “Stop! The present and the past are only similar, they are not the same.” (Unless they are, of course, the same.) Remember that pain *compounds*; painful things in our past that are similar to those in the present are difficult to separate. Because of this, we often overreact to events. Remember the powerful pull of memory to hold us hostage entrapped in a life of deception. Even though the memory keeps playing like a broken record, it isn’t necessarily *valid*.

The value of this exercise cannot be overemphasized: it is extremely cathartic, bringing to the surface persistent emotions that bind us. It provides a vocabulary from which to solve the problem. *Correct naming is a powerful prerequisite to problem solving.* Our logic intervenes to show us how the differences and similarities between the past and present may be deceiving. By acknowledging and embracing the emotions of the past, we are free to let go of them once and for all. This process moves us out of the helpless, acted-upon victim role toward a more honest appraisal of our reality.

Interview yourself about a problem relationship. Another helpful exercise is to think about the person who is giving you the most grief. Record *all* of your observations about this person, not just the negative ones. Does he or she seem different? Are they more *like* you than *different* from you? Can you feel their fear that undergirds much of the contention in the

relationship? Can you focus on what their behavior says about *them* and not what you think (conclude) it says about *you*? Write the following:

- This is the *behavior* I see
- These are the *conclusions* I have drawn
- These are the *emotions* I feel
- This is what I *believe*
- *I* have created my own emotions and my beliefs by concluding
- There is more to the story. It could be
- My hope is
- These are some of my options about what to do
- For now, I will

Write letters to others. It is easy to get into shouting matches or self-defeating downward spirals. Writing a letter to someone with whom you are having difficulty transforms confusing, destructive internal dialogue into coherent mutually beneficial solutions. Assume the end result of the letter will actually be given to the person, though you may choose not to. Start where you are, honestly describing your feelings in whatever language best describes how you really feel. Don't worry about who will see it at the moment. Just get your emotions down on paper. When finished, put it aside for a day or two. Rewrite the letter, refining your thoughts and feelings more clearly. Continue editing the letter until you are satisfied with the results, waiting a few days in between revisions if you wish. Use the value of mutuality as the guiding principle to your thoughts and writing. Say what you wish to say the way you would want someone to say it to you. At the conclusion, decide whether you wish to give the letter to the person. Consider the timeliness of the situation. How receptive is the other person to hearing what you wish to convey? What are the likely outcomes? Is it worth the risk? Remember, by just defining or redefining our own limits or boundaries, we often reconcile the difficulty; the only thing left is to act upon our resolve. Telling a person how we feel sometimes works; however, sometimes actions speaks much louder than words.

Take Time for Reflection and Rejuvenation

Taking time out for the dust to settle is the most important time of the day. Meditation, prayer, scripture study, journal writing, or just thinking give us a leg up on solving our problems for the day. Psychiatrist and author Scott Peck attributes much of his success to the practice of taking time, at least one hour of each day, to think. Gandhi encouraged us to "turn the spotlight inward," allowing the mind to relax, to let thoughts that need to bubble up do so, and then to exorcise themselves. Learn to rely upon those subtle thoughts, mental pictures, and feelings buried deeply

within that bring us to truth about ourselves and the world in which we live and work. Get in touch with your hero attributes, your innate goodness, the light you already have that is waiting for expression.

The light tells you that you are more than your physical being, more than your emotions, and more than your intellect. You are able to step free from the bondage of your job.

In *Reawakening the Spirit in Work*, Jack Hawley describes the process of getting in touch with light as “power thinking.” He says,

We can choose light. We can decide to step out from the shade into the sun. We can weave positive thoughts into such a tight pattern that they block out darkness. This doesn't mean we attempt to stifle negatives; more so, it's being aware of them, learning whatever there is to learn from them, and then choosing to spin on our heel and walk away from them.

We can comb good thoughts and put them to work for us. Rather than letting thoughts steal our vigor, we can pick thoughts that nourish. We can even piece together a personal history from positive memories—erasing past errors whose memories weaken us in the present—so that looking back brings strength to our present. This conjured-up strength is just as real as all the personal weaknesses people so often recall, and it's far better for us.

In fact, it is within our power to invite in no less than the most sought after thing on the planet; peace of mind. Inner peace, after all, arises where our thoughts begin, and it extends outward from there.³⁵

But pondering is a tender process to approach with sensitivity and care. Lusseyran suggests that memories and emotions are fragile things. You should never bear down on them, or draw on them by main force. You should “barely touch them with the tips of your fingers, the tips of your dreams.” We thwart our efforts by striving too hard to “conjure up” strengths or self-worth. Paradoxically, they seem to sneak up on you in service to others.

In all of these exercises we are creating the lighted path needed to work our way through the garden of good and evil at work. They help us to begin to recognize our “wordless lies” as offenses against others. We grow in our ability to see that most frequently we have been hurt not by others but by ourselves; we recognize that others have been hurt not by us but by themselves. Their behavior says more about them than me; my behavior says more about me than them. We can let go of the fear a little more easily now and struggle a little less. We can focus our attention upon healing the wounds we have caused, especially those caused by our bitter resentments. We can now do what love requires.

In *Bonds of Anguish: Bonds of Love*, Warner summarizes the outcome of cultivating a true change of heart, allowing us to do what love requires:

No longer provoked and reinforced in our self-betrayal, and no longer feeling it necessary to defend ourselves, we respond openly and caringly to our former colluders. And when we do, *we* change. We give them a different person to respond to. We give them the best possible opportunity to see us without accusation. That is why the best way to help others change their attitude towards us is to change our attitude toward them. There exists no better means of promoting their change of heart than our change of heart.

When

we end self-betrayal

we do right by people,

we respond to them

openly, honestly, and empathetically.

We see them truthfully, without fear,

resentment or accusation.

We give them a different person to

respond to.

We free them

to use their agency productively

instead of defensively.

. . . . We meet people who all their lives have provoked others to respond negatively to them and collude with them. If we refuse to respond to them in this way, we can

enter their lives as significant helpers who show them the way out of the self-destructive lies they have been living.

The most powerful human incentive, in families and in organizations, is the opportunity to grow in an atmosphere free of criticism and evasion, which is to say, an atmosphere of love. Nothing we can do will help others give up their own negative attitudes and grow as much as simply giving up our own negative attitudes.

Many we meet offer us the chance to render this service. When they change in response to our love, they become free to turn and affect others similarly. If our primary desire is to do this, there is no limit to the power for good we can have. There is an unbreakable link between obedience to our own conscience and this power of influence with others. Said one: ‘The day this obedience becomes a quest and not an irritation is the day we gain power.’

When others give up their negative attitudes, what they give back to us is love. Thus individuals liberated from the transactional, scarcity mentality create around them a society of people who care for them—and in turn motivate them further to care for others. Love feeds upon itself as surely as criticism does.³⁶

You Can’t Get There from Here

I don’t believe Frankl, ten Boom, Lusseryan or anyone else possesses the ability to do what love requires by simply *willing* themselves to try harder. I think this is precisely why Reverend Sharpton and others are so frustrated with the majority white voice in America. From the victim’s perspective, they *are* trying harder!



Myth #9 : If I just try harder, everything will be okay.

Or, “if *they* would just try harder everything would be okay.” Judging others through our own rose-colored lenses—just pushing others to try harder to find another boot strap or belt—blinds us to the broader issues. We give lip service to our ideals but our *thinking* which undergirds the whole process continues as before. Polarized, we continue the isolation, reinforcing more false boundaries that will never go away without examining *how we think about the problem*. The truth is that under the circumstances most people do the very best they can with what they have at the time. For the

most part, humankind is called to responsibility. Not always, but most of the time, when people know better, they will do better.

Ironically, in the same way fear brings to pass what one is afraid of, a *forced intention* makes impossible that which one excessively hopes for. For example, the more we strive to be happy, to feel pleasure, or to be “highly effective,” the less we are able to succeed. Finding satisfaction and joy is always a byproduct of the intention; it is diminished to the degree to which it is made the goal or object of our desires. Think of those times in your life when at the very time you “let go” of the object of your desire, it miraculously came to you. Have you ever been desperate to get to sleep and only when you stop trying do you find yourself waking up the next morning?

One way to break these vicious cycles is to invoke a paradoxical wish that virtually takes the wind out of our anxiety or excessive striving. We deliberately embrace the fear with an even greater intensity than we first imagined or do the very opposite of the thing desired. Frankl calls this “paradoxical intention.”³⁷ We exercise our capacity to self-detach in the same way we do when we engage a sense of humor. By stepping outside ourselves, we see the irony and absurdity of our concerns about our worklife as it fits into a larger picture of our lives. We are not our jobs! On a spiritual level, we let go: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

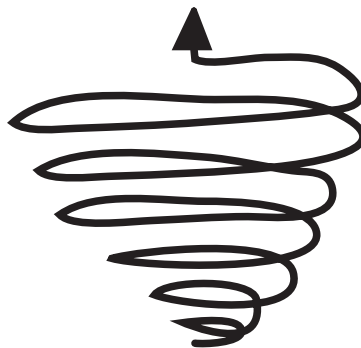
In my experience in the workplace, many people linger way too long in the same old rut, try too hard doing the same old things, joust too many windmills, and swim against the stream of their true nature and abilities. Others become so fearful and despondent they just go home in one way or the other. They mark time, complain at the water cooler, and wait for retirement, absent of hope that things can be better.

It is not our self-pity or contempt that breaks these vicious cycles of self-defeating behavior; it is self-transcendence. We find gentle and creative ways to make sense of our particular situation without undue self-recrimination or finger pointing. For Frankl, it was finding meaning in the madness, for ten Boom it was using her experience to redefine future events, for Luseyran it was to live in the light.

Weighing in the mind with thoroughness and care (what is reverent), the subtleties of the interaction begin to unravel and the mess that divides us begins to disappear. With our intellects and our hearts we perceive afresh what is right to do. We understand the shades of grey instead of staying polarized by black-and-white thinking. Our intellect pulls us to gather more information from which

to plot a new course of action; our spirit pulls us toward the right action. As we explore our interrelatedness, our intellect and spirit move us to get out of the ruts that entrap us; we recognize that cause and effect go in circles, not in straight lines, and that whatever action we take may generate both positive and negative consequences. This is what is real.

Who has time or opportunity to think, much less to think about, what we think about? And what if what we need to think about involves something unpleasant—especially about ourselves? The frenetic pace of our lives is not conducive to reflection. Without that reflection, we continue to do what we've always done, getting the miserable results we've always had. Without awareness and attention, no problem will improve. If we are to reorder priorities, we must slow thought down to look at it. To keep our memories from holding us hostage to a life of deception, we become ever-watchful of our thoughts as if, in David Bohm's words, a "poisonous snake were always in the room." Our *balanced attention* becomes our *intention* (and vice versa). To become our own heroes, we focus our attention on the light—not darkness. We stretch our minds toward the light, and this effort brings further action that creates a new perception, new awareness and attention, then more action in an upward spiraling cycle.



Hence, we can see that taking a snapshot at any given point and treating it as absolute truth leads us down the road to misunderstanding, confusion, and conflict. The big picture, stretched out in time, is hidden from our view or at least shaded by the personal glasses we all wear and the frantic pace we keep. Take a deep breath and slow down—just for a moment—and ponder the thought that we don't see clearly . . .

Slow Me Down, Lord

Slow me down, Lord.

Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.

Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.

Give me, amidst the confusion of my day, the calmness of the everlasting hills.

Break the tensions of my nerves with the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory. Help me to know the magical restoring power of sleep.

Teach me the art of taking minute vacations—of slowing down to look at a flower; to chat with an old friend or make a new one; to pat a stray dog; to watch a spider build a web; to smile at a child; or read a few lines from a good book.

Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed.

Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values that I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny.³⁸

Life's enduring values include training our attention on the simple strengths of others and ourselves. When we attend only to the negative aspects of life, finding faults and shortcomings, we draw to ourselves those same attributes of resentment, scorn, and doubt. Likewise, when we send out the heroic attributes of love and acceptance, it returns to us as well—not always instantaneously—but in time, it comes back. With a new resolve to healing the wounds that bind us, new insight about our ineffective strategies for coping, a new commitment to mutuality, and a resolve to live in the light, we may continue on our journey to find new sources of power.

Endnotes

1. Mary Ellen Chase, quoted in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts* (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co. 1975), 698.
2. Peter Senge and David Bohm have written widely on the topic of dialogue. Also, some of my ideas and skills were learned from *Path of Dialogue*, a training program developed by Vitality Alliance/Praxis Group, Provo, UT., of which I am a certified trainer.
3. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 109.
4. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 67.
5. Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), vii.
6. Jacques Lusseyran, *And There Was Light* (New York: Parabola Books, 1987), i.
7. Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, 16.
8. Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, 312.
9. Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, 18-19.
10. Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, 19.
11. Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*, 280.
12. J. B. Ritchie, "Let Contention Cease: The Limits of Dissent in the Church," *Sunstone*, August, 1992, 45.
13. Ritchie, "Let Contention Cease: The Limits of Dissent in the Church," 45.
14. Source unknown. I copied this quotation from someplace many years ago without a reference.
15. 1 Corinthians, 13.
16. Henry Drummond, *The Greatest Thing in the World* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1990), 18-19.
17. Recounted by Eknath Easwaran, in *Words of Kindness*, edited by Helen Exley (New York: Helen Exley Publications, 1997).
- 18.18. "Seek first to understand before being understood," is a concept taught in *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, of which I am a certified trainer.
19. *Words on Loving and Caring*, Edited by Helen Exley (New York: Exley Publications, 1997).

20. Terry Warner, *Bonds of Anguish: Bonds of Love* (Salt Lake City: Arbinger Company, 1992), 2:4.
- 21.21. Eileen Caddy, *Words of Courage*, edited by Helen Exley (New York: Helen Exley Publications, 1997).
22. Gary Zukav, *The Seat of the Soul* (New York: Fireside, 1989), 202.
23. John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw On: The Family* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1988), 165.
24. Victoria Secunda, *When Madness Comes Home* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 247.
25. Daniel Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), 24.
26. Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 25.
27. Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 26-27.
28. "Working with Adult Children of Alcoholics," *HR Magazine*, January 1992, 68-72.
29. Karl E. Weick, *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979).
- 30.30. R. D. Laing, *Knots* (Random House: New York, 1972), 1.
31. Bradshaw, *Brandshaw on the Family*, 165.
32. Carlfred Broderick, lecture in Provo, UT, March 12, 1986.
33. Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980); reprint, (New York: North Point Press, 1995), 165.
34. Claudia Kalb, "Pen, Paper, Power!" *Newsweek*, April 26, 1999, 75-76.

35. Jack Hawley, *Reawakening The Spirit In Work* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), 91.
36. Warner, *Bonds of Anguish: Bonds of Love* (outline of points in manuscript, 14-15).
37. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 123.
38. Orin L. Crane, quoted in *A Third Treasury of the Families*, ed. Ralph L. Woods (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), 427-28.