

Newsletter: Bringing the Inside Out

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Coaching 104: Decision Making:

When faced with making a hard decision in life, many people get a funny feeling or some anxiety called dissonance. Dissonance is the uncomfortable feeling that we experience when no perfect solution exists for a problem, leaving us to choose between imperfect alternatives.

Remember the last time that you made a major purchase such as a car or furniture for your home? Or maybe you had to make a major life decision such as changing your job or moving to a new community? If you had some choices, you may have tried to weigh the advantages or disadvantages of each. Did this seem to make the decision harder? And when you finally decided, did you have second thoughts, seeing problems with your choice and benefits in the alternatives that you rejected? This is dissonance, and it is very common. There is no cure for dissonance, but a system for making decisions can greatly reduce your worries in decision making by organizing your thinking. A simple model contains four steps: define the problem, get all the facts, formulate alternatives and lastly weigh the alternatives and decide.

The first step is to define the problem. What is the problem? Why is it a problem? Remember to look at the whole picture. Is it a separate, contained problem or is it a small piece, part of a larger problem?

Once you have defined the problem, get all the facts. Although you may never have all the information you want to make a decision, it is important to base your decision on as much information as possible. This stage in the decision making process usually takes the most time and effort and you may be impatient to move onto the next stage. Remember the best decision will be a result of thoroughly understanding the situation, only then can you judge which the best solution is.

The third step is to formulate alternatives. A common mistake in decision making is to define the problem, gather facts and then come up with a solution that seems to solve the problem. Without considering several alternative solutions, you won't know whether you are making the best decision or choice.

The final step is to weigh the alternatives and make the decision. Weighing each alternative means looking at the possible solutions to the problem to see whether or not it meets the desired results. After weighing the evidence for each choice, you can then decide which solution will solve your problem.

If you have problems making decisions, consider hiring a coach. Coaching can assist you with learning this skill among others to help build your confidence, so that decision making is much easier. To take the anxiety out of decision making try working through the above four steps. Using a systematic method can ease the worry of major decisions relieving decision making dissonance.

Leadership Defined

The dictionary has many definitions of leadership, including: to guide, direct or serve as a channel for, to direct the operations, activity or performance of, to take charge of or to be the first to do something or go somewhere. As early as 1938, researcher Chester Bernard was suggesting that leaders must have active qualities including vitality and endurance, decisiveness, persuasiveness, responsibility and intellectual capacity. More recently, Kouzes and Posner, in their book The Leadership Challenge assert that the definition of a leader is one who challenges, inspires, models, enables and encourages his or her followers.

In order to be a leader, one must have one or more followers. Leaders are responsible for placing the needs of their followers first and are responsible for making the decisions. Leaders must create bonds of loyalty and trust in order to inspire others to follow them. In organizations, the leader has the responsibility to produce or drive change and create a culture of leadership.

John Kotter, a noted expert in Leadership studies, states “Leadership responsibility goes beyond setting the direction, communicating the vision and motivating people. It also includes recruiting people with additional leadership potential and developing that potential in an environment that values what leaders provide. “

Showing mastery of change is also a critical part of leadership. Leaders regulate the speed, direction and rhythm of change in an organization. Leaders and their followers take decisive actions that make change happen. In order to lead a change, there must be a vision, communication of that vision, motivation to implement the vision and action which can involve taking a risk to implement the vision.

Often people confuse management and leadership but there are significant differences. Leaders visualize change, managers implement it. Leaders set a direction, while managers plan, budget and organize. Kotter states “management controls people, while leadership motivates them.” A manager

may be a leader, but many managers are lacking in leadership skills. A question to ask yourself might be “do you motivate or control your followers?”

The more self-aware a leader is the richer the relationships she or he will have with his or her followers. Higher self-awareness also ensures that leaders are more flexible and better at managing change. Leadership expert, Peter Drucker states that you can improve your self-awareness by knowing your strengths and concentrating on them, working on improvement, knowing how to learn and knowing your values. Improving your own self-knowledge is the first step to becoming a better leader.

In summary, the key components of leadership contain much more than the dictionary definitions show. In order for there to be leadership, there must be followers and there must be change. The leader must be action oriented, a visionary and self-aware. Leaders take risks and are responsible to their followers.

Leadership is a complex field and there are many books written about it. There are also many classes and courses offered in leadership development. We all have a little leader in us, should we care to develop it.

Making a Change - Tips

- 1. Take some quiet time:** find a quiet place, take a few deep breaths and ask yourself: “what do I really want?” Think about this for about 10 minutes and then return to your life. You should have a clearer mind and you may have a different perspective.
- 2. Add some details:** When you want to make a change, get clear about it. Imagine what it would be like, write it down, talk about it – really try to “put yourself there” with all the details.
- 3. Create a pro-con list:** write down what the positive and negatives of the change would be, including what the cost may be if you don’t even try.
- 4. Reality check:** What is the worst thing that can happen? How likely is this to occur? What is the best thing that can happen? Rate the possible risks and benefits against what you have already experienced in your life – are they more, less or the same?
- 5. Eliminate your roadblocks:** What is standing in your way? List them and brainstorm ways to eliminate them or reduce their impacts.
- 6. Add supports:** What do you need to move forward? Solutions can include training, information, support, stronger belief in your abilities.

7. Improve your self talk: talk nicely to yourself. Remember to only say things to yourself that you would say to a good friend. Write down nice things to say to counter the negative – things like: you can do it, it is worth it, just a little bit more.

A life worth living is worth jumping in and risking the changes. When we hesitate and stick to what is comfortable there is a risk of never achieving what we want out of life. The only difference between you and the ones you envy or want to emulate is that they are going for it and you are not.

Inside Out Upcoming Workshops:

January 18/25 – True Colors Careers at the Golden Alternate School

January 21 – Public True Colors workshop at the Prestige Inn in Golden (pre-register please)

February 13 – True Colors Teambuilding/Communication at the College of the Rockies (Invermere Campus) for the Introduction to Trades Program

February – Board/Staff Development at the Golden Family Centre

In order to invite Inside Out Coaching and Consulting to facilitate a workshop for your organization, please call Leslie Adams at 250-344-6949.

Quotes to Live By:

“Everything you want is out there waiting for you to ask. Everything you want also wants you. But you have to take action to get it.”

Jules Renard