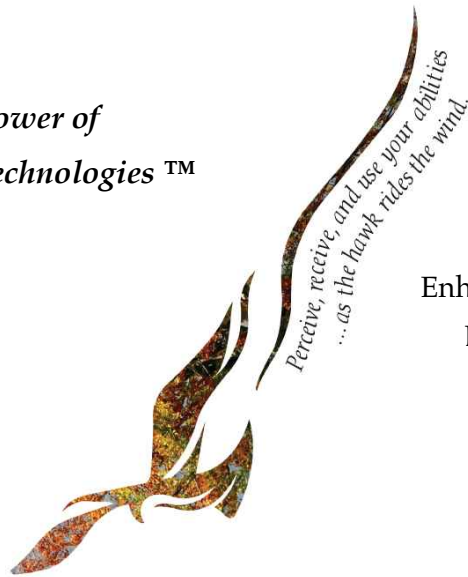


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Edited and published by Joel P. Bowman and
Debra Basham for SCS Matters, LLC
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Welcome...

Here is your *Beyond Mastery Newsletter* for September 2013. This newsletter may be duplicated and distributed to those who share an interest in Energy Medicine, neurolinguistics—especially Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)—and spirituality.

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This month the featured articles are “Nonviolent Communication,” by Debra; and “Evolution of Consciousness,” by Joel.

Nonviolent Communication

Most of us grew up having heard the nursery rhyme, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Although familiar with the saying, our experience was just the opposite—words can (and do) cut to the quick. In fact, without consciousness words can inflame, making a bad situation worse. Careless words can wound both the listener and the speaker, breaking hearts, building walls, and making mountains out of molehills.

Toltec teacher Don Miguel Ruiz, author of *The Four Agreements* (<http://bit.ly/1bm0jld>), says the first is the most important: to be impeccable with your word. He says, “Regardless of what language you speak, your intent manifests through the word. What you dream, what you feel, and what you really are, will all be manifested through the word.”

Ruiz is not the first one to remind humans of the power of the word. In the New Testament, Christians are told, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Marshall B. Rosenberg, founder of the Center for Nonviolent Communication, expresses a worthy vision, “When our communication supports compassionate giving and receiving, happiness replaces violence and grieving!”

Even when you have made a personal goal of being impeccable with your word, it is difficult to stay conscious enough to respond to rudeness without being rude. It can be easier to react to meanness with more of the same. However, there are some steps that allow you to be more at choice more of the time.

If you were with a young child who was yelling at you or saying inappropriate things or making threats, as much as you found the behavior intolerable, you would also simultaneously realize the immature state of that child, and you would do your best to bring the needed maturity to the situation. Imagine having the presence of mind to keep your eye on the larger truth that the same dynamic (and opportunity) is at play regardless of the “age” of the other.

One very important choice right now is for you to make nonviolent communication a way of life. For most people to be able to do that, it is vital you recognize and understand completely that this is not about allowing another to be unkind or mean or disrespectful to you. Quite to the contrary—your awareness and highest intention extends these very values to *both of you*.

Nonviolent Communication includes a simple method for clear, empathic communication, consisting of four steps: observations, feelings, needs, requests. It is a way for individuals to have needs and wants met (what really matters to them) “without the use of guilt, humiliation, shame, blame, coercion, or threats.” Nonviolent communication, consciousness, awareness—we are talking about “resolving conflicts, connecting with others, and living in a way that is conscious, present, and attuned to the genuine, living needs of yourself and others.” (See <http://bit.ly/U0Vsx>.)

Use regret in a positive way, first as a motivator to generate compassion for the woman that you were who did the best she could and just didn't understand how things were. Second, as a generator of commitment to insight, to honesty and authenticity, allowing yourself to reflect on that situation, and bring forth the commitment not to reenact that situation now. Ask yourself, “What forces would help me not to reenact it, whatever I did that was unskillful?” Not shaming yourself but inviting yourself to act in a more skillful way for the good of all. We call it compassionate regret. (Deep Spring Center Thought for the Day, August 13, 2013)

Begin to think of each challenging interaction as an opportunity to develop your new skills. A less mature behavior on the part of the other can be seen as what it truly is: a call for love, patience, and kindness. In many ways, it is actually a gift to you. If you were trying to learn a foreign language and someone who only spoke that language came along with a valid need, you would recognize the chance to practice that new language. You would feel your desire. You would affirm your choice. You would honor your commitment. Nonviolent communication is almost a foreign language to our culture, but it is a very worthy goal.

Sara was a Jew, living in Germany in the late 1930's. She knew things were growing increasingly threatening, and when she heard that Jews could get visas in Berlin, she had a glimmer of hope. She traveled many hours to get there. She waited in the line of the lone German bureaucrat. She was not alone. There were many others in that hot, cramped room.

It was not what she wanted to hear, “No visas today! Come back tomorrow.” Imagine the panic of having to find a room for the night, not being able to get word to her family, and not even knowing for sure what would happen the next day. Again, the endless line of desperate people waiting. Again, the bureaucrat working at the desk not offering help or visas.

Late in the afternoon, the silence was broken by another loud pronouncement by the bureaucrat. His words brought instant heartbreak to those assembled. "There are no visas. Everyone must go home." After the shock of his words was absorbed, people responded by letting out their pent-up emotions. Complaint after complaint was voiced, some with raw anger mixed with utter despair.

Sara no doubt felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. Her fate, and that of her family, had hung in the balance; now, very hot and tired, she had to make the long trip home with nothing to show for it. Did Sara join in with the chorus of despair directed at the bureaucrat? If so, no one would blame her.

What she did, though, was quite different. She wended her way slowly through the crowd, and walked right up to where the bureaucrat was sitting. She leaned over and said to him, "I want to thank you for all of your time. Have a good day."

She wended her way slowly through the crowd, and walked right up to where the bureaucrat was sitting. Then she slowly turned from him and walked out the door. Walked down the hall with whatever strength she could muster. Almost at the stairway . . . when she heard the loud clacking of shoes running towards her. She turned, and saw that it was the bureaucrat, and he was holding pieces of paper in his hand. "I have these visas I can give you," he said.

And that's how she was able to get her family out of Europe.

(http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1653058/jewish/How-a-Kind-Word-Saved-Her-Life.htm)

Once you have made the choice to be respectful with your words (respecting yourself and others), you will need to be patient with your first attempts, especially when you have not been spot on. A learning curve is to be expected, and you will have ample chances to be compassionate with yourself as you are learning. You will quickly notice slight improvements you could have made, and you will easily integrate your awareness in ways that facilitate more mature expressions in the future. While not every exchange will be life or death, one can never know for sure how powerful the choice of your kind words might be. That was certainly true for Sara, wasn't it...

Evolution of Consciousness

One of the long-standing conundrums is the question, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" The answer depends on how "sound" is defined. Humans (and I suppose other animals) define "sound" as something we perceive with the sense of hearing. Physicists define "sound" as vibrations falling within a certain range of frequencies.

In the evolution of consciousness, the first meaning of "sound" preceded the second by thousands of years. In that sense, "consciousness" is similar to the forest we can't see because we are too close to the trees. We tend to assume that our ancient ancestors were "conscious" in the same way we are, and we tend to assume that all humans currently alive are equally conscious. We are aware only of the trees in our immediate

vicinity. We have not considered the entire forest.

When we read documents we consider “old,” such as Shakespeare, Dante, the Greek playwrights and poets, the Old Testament, the writings of Confucius, and the Koran, we tend to read through a modern filter of perception. Most movies and TV shows give the impression that those living in “olden times” were just like us but without modern technology. That’s a false impression.

Our ancestors accepted as “normal” many things that would horrify most people living today. In “olden times” (and still in some parts of the world) both crucifixion and burning were common means of execution. At this point in human history, many people consider the death penalty, however humanely administered, primitive and unnecessary. Consciousness is changing.

Philosopher Ken Wilber has said that consciousness evolves in “waves and streams.” See <http://bit.ly/93opos> (Web page) and <http://bit.ly/17AQwND> (pdf) for Wilber’s explanation. The main thing to note (at least from my perspective) is that the evolution of consciousness is not uniform. At any point in time, cultures and individuals will be at different stages of evolution. Some will be more “advanced” than others. There’s also no guarantee that evolution will be forever “forward.” Cultures and individuals can regress.

Because each of us has a limited view of humanity as a whole, it is hard for us to tell where we are in relation to the whole. If we’re in a forest, we know the trees we’re standing next to, but we can’t tell the size of the forest unless we change our perspective. If you have climbed (or driven up) a mountain, you may have encountered the “tree line,” the elevation beyond which trees can’t grow. The same is basically true of consciousness. Wherever we are in the waves and streams of the evolution of consciousness, we tend to think that’s where everyone else is, where everyone has been, and where everyone will be.

In “Forest Gump” (the movie and I assume the novel as well), the title character says that he is not very smart. It takes a certain degree of intelligence, however, to recognize that others might be smarter in some respects. We live in an age of specialization. My specializations were English literature and business communication. I did very well with those subjects. I also failed calculus as an undergraduate. Others tend to say that I am “smart” when it comes to literature but not so smart when it comes to math. That’s an example of “waves and streams.”

Such specializations, however, are separate from the evolution of consciousness. While intelligence and an “evolved” consciousness often go together, it is possible to be extremely intelligent and have an undeveloped level of consciousness, just as Forest Gump illustrates the possibility of having a highly evolved consciousness without being super intelligent.

The main thing is, of course, awareness. I was a lackadaisical student throughout most of my elementary education. When I was in about the 4th grade, I failed two spelling tests in a row. I didn’t like that. I asked one of my friends who consistently got 100 percent on the spelling tests how he knew how to spell the words. His answer: “I study.” He actually took the spelling list home and studied it before the test. That idea had not occurred to me. When I started doing that, I started getting perfect scores on the tests as well.

One of the difficulties of applying that strategy to speeding the evolution of consciousness is that the “lists” we have to study are old and imperfect. However much

wisdom was conveyed by Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, and other wise philosophers and spiritual leaders of the past, what has come down to us was filtered through the state of cultural evolution at the time. And that's undoubtedly a good thing.

That puts the responsibility of further evolution of consciousness directly on us. My 4th grade friend told me to study the spelling words, but he couldn't study them for me. I had to do that myself. The evolution of our consciousness—both individual and cultural—is our responsibility. This requires getting above the tree line so that we can see the forest as a whole. I am reasonably convinced that we can't avoid this responsibility because ignorance is bliss only in the short term.

The more aware we are that we are part of this process, the waves and streams, the better able we are to appreciate how far we have come.

Language Tips and More

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You can stay in touch with us by Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or Skype. You can also text or send a quick email message: debra@scs-matters.com or joel@scs-matters.com, and within the continental U.S., you can call Debra at (269) 921-2217.

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