

LIVING WITH GHOSTS

Many of us have lived with ghosts from our yesterdays that continue to haunt our today. Many times I've wondered, what does it take to cut the strings from the memories to allow those ghosts that haunt my life to live elsewhere?

In reality, we have a greater likelihood of cutting off one of our extremities than cutting out these painful memories. I suspect you would agree removing an extremity is not a good thing.

Accept the past. The brutal truth is the memories and any events that created them are part of our lives and they are not going away. The question each of us must answer is the amount of energy and power we're giving them in our lives.

Live with the ghosts. Yes, we have choice points as when we're walking—do we take the path to the left or right? So do we chose sadness and allow the ghosts to dominate or do we chose happiness and put the ghosts back into the closet?

The irony is the ease these ghosts creep into our lives to sabotage our enjoyment of life and the strength of the magnetic qualities of these memories in spite of the fact our bodies are designed to automatically withdraw from the source of pain. You experience that event every time you touch a hot object. You would think we would likewise avoid any thoughts that contributed to our emotional pain.

Sometimes we wake up and the ghosts appear to be an uninvited guest in our lives. Other times, we experience an event that opens the floodgates to allow the ghosts to rush in. Either way, it's easy to energize the emotional pain as if to punish ourselves with our own thoughts. That's analogous to taking a gun and shooting ourselves in the feet before tomorrow's race. We, of course, would not do that because of the pain associated with that act and it would interfere with running the race. Perhaps the ghosts become energized because we're fearful the ghosts may really be true and argue that we're kidding ourselves that we could do anything differently. So the ghosts serve to shatter, or at least crack our beliefs and dreams. As Pogo once said, *"I met the enemy and it is me."*

Mental strength. The mental ingredients to successfully keep our ghosts in the closet include:

1. *Awareness.* It's important to understand from where such thoughts originate and the impact they have upon our lives. Understanding is an important key to maintaining emotional strength.
2. *Forgiving.* Forgiving helps break the chain that holds us to the past. Forgiving is achieved by accepting the brutal truth of the memories, admitting that you don't like them, and defining how your life has been strengthened by the experience.
3. *Choices.* Memories and events are going to trigger the release of the ghosts and they'll come rushing into consciousness. When that happens, you'll have a choice—allow the painful memory to dominate or put it back into the closet through examining the ghost and learning from it, while emphasizing the good in your life and continuing the positive behaviors that will bring success in your life.
4. *Lock onto your vision.* Saturate your existence by "acting as if" your vision is today's reality. To be, you must think you are.
5. *Believe in a higher power.* Believing that a higher power is helping you gives you a boost of self-confidence to believe in yourself.
6. *Feed the brain.* As a part of your body, the brain needs constant nourishment with positive food from books, friends and co-workers. Positive thoughts produce positive behaviors.

READINESS FOR CHANGE

My son, Michael, at St. Galen's University in Switzerland, has completed extensive research to apply the Readiness for Change concept within organizations. The concept emerged from work in psychotherapy to predict success in treating individuals with a variety of addictions. The survey is a 30-item questionnaire and you can complete it from our web site www.teammax.net. Also download the 7-Step Personal Change Process and you can readily see the relationship between with the following stages of change.

1. Precontemplative. Individuals in this stage have no intention to change behavior in the foreseeable future. These individuals are either naively unaware of the need for change or actively resist awareness of the need for or benefits of change. Individuals within this stage may express a "hollow wish" to improve performance, but resistance to recognizing or modifying a problem is the hallmark of precontemplation.

Individuals within the precontemplative stage need to understand the energy associated with the disadvantages of their present interpersonal performance exceed the energy associated with their advantages (i.e., Step 1 Recognize Need). Some individuals may benefit from a multi-rater assessment to help recognize the need to change, while others are locked in this stage and will not recognize the need to change.

2. Contemplative. Individuals who reside in this change stage are aware of a need for and benefits of change to improve their interpersonal skills, and are seriously considering changing in the near future but have not yet committed to take action. Individuals can be stuck in the contemplation stage for a long period of time.

These individuals need to work on creating an epidemic of frustration to drive the need to change. This epidemic is created by emphasizing the disadvantages of their present behavior compared to the advantages (i.e., Step 1, Recognize Need). Individuals residing in the contemplative stage can also benefit from the energy derived from recognizing the advantages of improving interpersonal performance exceed the advantages of remaining the same (i.e., Step 4. Willingness to Change).

3. Preparation. Individuals in this change stage are intending to take action very soon. They may be questioning how to improve their performance, or may have already initiated minor actions to improve performance.

These individuals need to create an epidemic of a willingness to change (i.e., Step 4) by seeing themselves being the person they want to be (i.e., Step 5). Creating a personal image of participating in the change process and enjoying the benefits of the change produces higher levels of personal motivation.

4. Action. This stage is characteristic of individuals who are actively involved in making interpersonal changes to overcome their problems. These individuals are exhibiting the commitment to do whatever it takes to improve their interpersonal performance.

These individuals have moved to Step 6, Personal Change. They are willing participants and working hard to improve their performance. They have accepted the challenge to "be the best they can be."

5. Maintenance. Individuals in the maintenance stage have made significant progress to improve their interpersonal performance and want to continue using effective interpersonal performance. The concern of these individuals is the possibility of regressing to an earlier change stage and the use of problem behaviors. The focus is on stabilizing the behavior change and avoiding a relapse.

These individuals have completed a change cycle and are interested in continued feedback (i.e., Step 7) to ensure a continued use of effective interpersonal behaviors. Individuals residing in the maintenance stage are also interested in participating in follow-up change efforts to maintain their current performance level.

A MESSAGE TO YOU...

There is a lot of excitement in the air as the long, hot summer draws to a close.

First, we're networking with National Seminars Group who will use our MBC Software® methodology to quantify the degree behaviors taught in the classroom transfer to the workplace. We're really excited about working with the National Seminars Group and helping their clients to maximize the return on their financial investment to conduct training.

Second, our book **People-\$mart Leaders: Maximize People, Performance and Profits** is selling quite well. And, that's a good thing.

Third, I'm in the process of writing my next book, **Enthusiasm From The Inside Out**. I've had this manuscript for 10 + years, and it is now time to put it into print.

Fourth, we've begun the research project to learn more about the behaviors that managers use that adversely impact the working relationships.

Fifth, we've revised the www.teammax.net web site. Please visit the site. Visit the Resource Center for downloads including this newsletter.

A friend shared the following, and I thought you would enjoy it.

Secrets of Happiness

Forgive
Apologize
Avoid Mistakes
Listen to advice
Keep your temper
Shoulder the blame
Make the best of things
Maintain high standards
Think first and act accordingly
Put the needs of others before your own



Recommended Books

A good friend of mine, Ray Pelletier, released his new book, **It's All About Service** on May 13 and sadly then died on May 21 following a surgical procedure. I only knew Ray for a couple of years, but in that brief time he had a huge impact upon my life. You'll benefit greatly from this excellent book.

Another fascinating read is **What I Learned From Sam Walton** by Michael Bergdahl. You'll enjoy this book and learn a lot about the Wal-Mart culture.

Now for a different twist, read **Emotional Prisoner** by Jose Villegas III. Jose wrote about his transformation from an addictive lifestyle to a more healthy one. You've got to respect the progress he made, but be ready for some street language in the book.



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Thoughts to think about...

“People celebrate achievements and spotlight heroes but the truly heroic act is not the outcome but in starting out and not knowing if you will succeed.”

– Soren Kierkegaard

“A vivid imagination compels the whole body to obey it.”

–Aristotle

“If you want to know your future, look at what you are doing in this moment.”

—Tibetan Saying

“It is the imagination and not the will that is the dominating faculty of man. It is a serious mistake to advise people to train their wills; they should learn to control and direct their imaginations.”

–Emile Couce

“The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross and which to burn.”

–David Russell

“On course doesn't mean perfect. On course means that even when things don't go perfectly, you are in the right direction.”

–Charles Garfield



“You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try.”

–Beverly Sills

“The only people you should ever want to get “even” with are those who have helped you.”

–John Honeyfeld

“One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.”

–Jack Penn

“You never saw a fish on the wall with its mouth shut.”

–Unknown