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Morning Session Your Unique LifeValues History

How Childhood Dreams Become Adult Habits

Your family history influences your leadership style today, including the decisions you make concerning employees and customers. Childhood ideas about what mattered most to you, fantasies about what you wanted, and behaviors that seemed "right" or "wrong" when you were young are likely to stay with you, more or less, over the years. These ideas are both symbolic and literal for children, and they endure for many of us throughout adulthood. The following exercise is designed to help you examine your Unique LifeValues History and recall the realities, dreams, and fantasies about what you were taught to value as children. Doing this will reveal interesting aspects about your leadership today and should help you understand your behavior patterns as well as those with whom you work (and/or share your life). In your leadership position(s), you can unwittingly reenact your original family culture without being aware of why you are doing it. In fact, you may be imitating a parent's behaviors even when you do not like those behaviors.

Whenever you establish an administrative or management relationship with another, you are dealing with the family patterns and cultures from *two* distinct pasts. Identifying your own childhood patterns will help give you insight into what you value (or dislike) about your leadership style today and will allow you to shed any behavior you have outgrown. The goal is to make choices that fully reflect your adult values rather than the needs, wants or shoulds that might still be mired in your childhood.

Your Unique LifeValues History

With only a few minutes of serious reflection, you can record vital information about your childhood that will help you understand your leadership style today.

Step One: Think carefully about what went on in your childhood and how you interacted with

your parents and your siblings, silences when you asked questions, the "things" you wished for and now and whether you got them, and the decisions that were made for you. Write a few summary points that you recall as being particularly significant.

authorities in your life (parents, siblings, teachers, others). What about them did you enjoy? Recal
one very special experience? What made it "special"?
Step Three : Write a brief description of your most negative childhood memories about the authorities in your life (parents, siblings, teachers, others). What about them did you dislike? Recall one unhappy experience? What made it unhappy?
Step Four : Now, compare your childhood experiences with your positive and negative habits as an adult in a leadership position. Do you recognize any childhood patterns or preferences brought into adulthood? If so, are they compatible with your adult values and lifestyle, or do they cause disharmony?

The Payoffs of Becoming Self-Aware Leaders

The payoffs of learning about these influences, motives and behaviors can be huge. Ask your partner to complete these exercises too, because the issues you will uncover can help smooth the way for improved communication and mutual understanding in <u>all</u> of your relationships. In fact, the relationship benefits that will emerge are immediately transferable to the other personal and professional choices you will make throughout your life.

Then begin to use your Unique LifeValues History to gain insight into your current behaviors. Here are three crucial questions to ask yourself as you approach a particularly important problem or decision:

- 1. Why do I want/need to make this particular decision or choice?
- 2. How do I tend to make important decisions? Am I an actively engaged leader or passive and reactive?
- 3. Do I sense something irrational about my reaction to this particular issue? (Increased anxiety that seems excessive or inappropriate, for instance.)
- 4. Does my decision-making approach help me or hurt me?

As you become better acquainted with your own inner motivations, the answers to these three questions will sharpen. Focusing on these questions will help you further understand your behavior patterns. You will discover which behaviors are habit-driven, which are based on satisfying childhood desires, and which are truly values-driven.

You can use this insight to navigate your way with increased strength of purpose through the decisions you face every day.