

Editorial Submission for May 1st, 2006

More and more people are asking questions like: Who am I? What am I doing here? How do I get more from my relationships? How do I feel better? Such questions indicate a desire among all of us to live more creatively. The fact is that while we may have the internal resources to lead our lives in more meaningful ways, we still need to learn the art of capitalizing on these resources.

The reality of our existence is that all of us experience difficulties in our lives – at work, at home, and in social situations. Not being able to find solutions to our difficulties, some of us may tend to resign, accept the “fate” and withdraw ourselves from those situations – quite our job, divorce, move away, seek comfort in excessive eating, drinking or unhealthy behaviours.

Many of our problems or unhealthy behaviours tend to repeat themselves in one form or another. For example when Terry divorced his first two wives and re-married for the third time, he found himself getting into the same predicaments with his third wife. As long as she was a helpless and passive dependent, or in crisis, Terry felt “needed or valued”. However, when she began to earn money, grow and become more assertive, he did not know how to handle himself and maintain the relationship with her.

In the second case, Sara found that the way she felt towards her boss and the way she reacted to him was similar to the relationship she had with her father. In both these situations, Sara felt that her talents were never recognized by her father (in the past) and by her boss (in her current job). It seems that Sara, a very talented woman, was always looking for affirmation from an authority, without which she felt lost, demoralized and depressed.

In a third case, Doug found that the problems he experienced with his team mates at work were similar to the problems he had experienced during his school years, with his peers. He needed to learn new ways to relate with his colleagues.

Mental health professionals believe that many of our difficulties are a replay of old issues. Over the years, we have learned to perceive others, feel and act in a certain way, and we just keep on repeating them. Sadly, we fail to realize that if these actions did not solve our past problems, then, there is no way that they could solve our present or future problems.

One of the major barriers to learning from our mistakes is our faulty beliefs. This warehouse of prejudices and opinions prevent us from our potential for growth and creativity. By not confronting or correcting these beliefs, we continue to maintain the unfortunate cycle of ineffective behaviours and unhappiness in our work, at home and in social situations.

When we let go of our expectations such as “he should...”, “she must...”, “I ought to...”, we may experience uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety at first. After all, taking a journey into an unknown and new ways of perceiving others, new ways of feeling and new ways of reacting is always scary.

On a positive note, all of life’s difficult situations and failures give us the opportunities to:

- a) Reflect on ourselves, our feelings and behaviours,
- b) Find a pattern in our behaviours (which may be self-defeating behaviours, which we may have learned in the past)
- c) Correct these behaviours, become more effective and happier human beings.

To learn more about mental health and to support our work, please contact us at 705.328.2704.