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Lunch Speaker

Wednesday, November 29th, 2006

12:00 – 1:30 PM

What is an emotional victim?

Emotional victims are people who do not accept responsibility for their own thoughts, emotions and behaviors. Any of us can be a victim in a physical sense. We can be mugged, or be in a car accident, or contract a virus. That doesn't make us an emotional victim. Emotional victims see the power over their emotions everywhere but within them. They are always in a reactive mode. In their view, outside things totally determine their emotional state. And if those outside things are not good they are in major trouble because they don't know how to use their own emotional and psychological and spiritual resources to cope with the problems.

Even when the lives of emotional victims are going relatively well they are a mess. Why? – Because they see their happiness as a direct result of their good fortune and since good fortune can change, they are always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

What is an emotional powerhouse?

People who are emotional powerhouses recognize that ultimately they are in charge of themselves. They do not constantly blame people and situations for their emotional state. I am not saying they never get upset or sad, but they don't stay in those places for very long because they realize that they and not others are in charge of their emotions. Emotional powerhouses do not depend on events or people to “make them feel good.” Of course they feel good when things do go their way but they aren't captive to that relationship. They are able to generate those good feelings from the inside out. They treat other people with respect, but do not accept responsibility for others' feelings. Therefore they will not get sucked into guilt trips. Emotional powerhouses know that thinking like a victim – becoming an emotional victim – will probably be worse than any situation they will ever face.

CHOICES

POWER IS ABOUT CHOICES!

Nowhere is the issue of power more important than in how it relates to choices. Power is about choices. If you don't see the choices you don't see the power. The more you hear yourself saying things like, "I have to. . .", or "He made me. . .", or "I got"(as in "I got mad") the less you acknowledge your own power. "I have to do this," or "He made me feel this way," says you had no choice. No choice – No power. And let's face it, those types of comments are said all the time by almost everybody. It's so common we just accept as truth the idea that we can't help what we feel and therefore, in essence, are helpless and have no real choices.

The really interesting thing about all of this is that most of us don't want to acknowledge that we are actually choosing to be helpless. It seems to be easier for most of us to be victims rather than accept responsibility for our own emotions and behaviors. Strange as it sounds there are perks in being an emotional victim. We get a lot of sympathy and we have no problem finding others who think just like we do. It wouldn't be hard to have a convention of helpless people. But it's a doomed philosophy. Emotional victims are slaves to other people, situations, luck, and whatever else you can think of.

If you are tired of being helpless, think about this. If you say that you can't help what you feel, you are stuck and at the mercy of outside people and things. If you acknowledge that you are making choices that put you in a helpless situation, you can do something about those choices. You don't have to wait for the world or the workplace to change before you can feel better. I know what you're thinking - Easier said than done. But remember, difficult is not impossible, it's just difficult.

Hope is also about choices. When, "I don't know what to do," or "I don't see anyway out," is replaced with, "Now I see some choices or options I didn't realize I had," hope arises. There is nothing more tragic than the loss of hope for both individuals and organizations. Choices give hope but only when the choice is acknowledged. You have to see the choices to make them come alive. Unfortunately, however, most of us keep making choices that keep us stuck.

CHOOSING TO STAY MISERABLE. . .

THE “YEAH BUT” SYNDROME

One of the major things I have learned over the years is that **not only are there a lot of miserable people (a.k.a. emotional victims) in the world, most of them are choosing to stay miserable and in fact are fighting to stay miserable..** This is my “yeah-but” strategy group.

Technically this group is not really discovering choices to improve their situation, but rather making choices to justify their misery. If I give suggestions to this group on how to improve their situations, how to take charge, they usually come up with, “Yeah, but you don’t know my boss...my wife...my husband.” People can, “yeah, but” any suggestion that they get, and they usually do. They know that they can always win that game because they can always come up with one more “yeah, but” than any amount of suggestions I or anyone can come up with.

As has been said elsewhere, if you argue enough for your limitations, they are yours. You will not make the choices necessary to change your life if you don’t believe you have the power to do that. And as long as you think like a victim you will not see those good choices. You will still be making choices, but they will not be helpful ones.

e.e. Cummings wrote, **“To be yourself in a world which is doing its best to make you someone else means to fight the hardest battle you will ever fight and never stop fighting.”**

Rudyard Kipling said, **“No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”**

YOU CAN

You can live your life in fear of pain, disappointment, and loss.

You can spend all your time “stressed out” being a victim.

You can constantly look towards the future waiting for the good times.

You can constantly look backward remembering the good times.

You can live your life like this and thereby actually not live it.

You can do all these things, but you don't have to!

You can also remind yourself that you are not helpless.

You can believe that you have the ability to determine the quality of your life.

You can ask for help when you are stuck.

You can choose to believe in your own power.

You can choose to be excited about possibilities

You can choose to accept responsibility for your own life.

You can choose to embrace the good and the bad, the joy and the

the fear, the sadness and the happiness.

FINALLY

We might not have many choices on the types of events that happen in our lives, but we always have choices on how we deal with these events.