

Spirituality and The Corporate Dilemma

Not a day goes by that we aren't involved in some type of conversation about current corporate shenanigans. The media are consumed by corporate wrongdoings and dinner party conversation eventually turns to who's the latest to be investigated. While many conversations revolve around ethics and morality in the business world, I suggest there's another perspective – spirituality, rather, the lack of spirituality. And the current crisis not only concerns corporate executives, but those who coach them as well—there needs to be a focus on integrity and authenticity at both ends of the coaching equation.

SPIRITUALITY, NOT MORALS OR ETHICS.

For me, it's all about spirituality. The commotion about what's happening in the corporate arena is about "spirituality", not about ethics or morality. Why? Morality is often connected with issues of right and wrong and eventually is based on social traditions or consensus that vary from culture to culture. At the end of the day, morality becomes subjective and judgmental and separates one from another.

In addition, ethics is a code of values that translates "morality" into daily living, i.e., doing and being. It "defines" right and wrong, how we relate to others, how we conduct business and how one behaves in general, most often leading to judgments, win-lose, right-wrong, mind games and ego-based stuff.

Spirituality is non-judgmental and non-separating. Spirituality is unchanging, so there's no debate, right-wrong, me vs. you, what spirituality is and isn't. At the end of the day, we all know what it means to live from the place of our soul and hearts. For those who come from a spiritual place, there are no labels and definitions and spirituality is a way of being that is common to all of humanity, needs no descriptions, definitions, etc.

So, at the end of the day, the "moral" is not spiritual and for much the same reason, neither is the "ethical."

The spiritual is that which allows me to be non-judgmental, and to serve as a witness, observer and watcher. The spiritual is not "mind", is not "information" is not "knowledge", not quantifiable DOs and DON'Ts . It is way, way beyond that. So, while the "moralist" and the "ethicist" spends countless hours and enormous energy "debating" the rights and wrongs of the corporate world, in their heads, intellectual stuff, one who practices spirituality just notices, e.g., "That's interesting." "Hmmm, is that so?" without any ethical or moral judgment, i.e., right-wrong, good-bad.

EGO AND MIND; WHO'S RIGHT, WHO'S WRONG

With a ground in spirituality one is not engaged in endless ego-based and mind-based "discussions" about corporate morality and ethics (read: "I need to be right; so you are wrong." "I win the argument so you lose." "My labels and categories and information are right, so your labels, and categories and information are incorrect." I, I, I — ego, judgmental and comparative mind.

Genuine spirituality does not judge, plain and simple. True spirituality comes from one's inner Self, one's essence, with an integrity, honesty, sincerity and self-responsibility that drives one's thoughts and actions. Such spirituality manifests patterns and behaviors that are common in all of life. Spirituality is an essential essence of human nature, a nature which is all too often clouded, diminished and distorted during the course of our upbringing.

So, what often happens is that we grow up less aware of our in-depth spiritual understanding of events, and operate more from an outer-world-driven subjective and judgmental "moralist" or "ethicist" mindset based on information and mental models that are stored in our brains over the course of time. The essence of who we really are, our True Self, becomes muddied as we grow up, and "my ethics and morals" are then developed based on mental models, beliefs and thoughts that emanate from our parents, schools, churches, synagogues, television, advertising, friends, Reality TV etc.

The downside is that I come to believe that MY mental models, MY beliefs and assumptions and images of the world, MY ethics and My morals are Truth (my Truth and thus, the Truth for everyone else as well).

One who is grounded in genuine spiritual understanding is not engaged in such ego-based stuff.

WHY WE ARGUE INSTEAD OF OBSERVE

Because so many of us identify with our ego minds, i.e., I AM what I know; I AM my information; I AM my mind; I AM my knowledge and, of course, I AM right, one often has trouble accepting and entertaining someone else's perspective. Consciously or subconsciously, one feels forced to view another's "perspective" more as a "position", one point on a continuum, or one end of a polarity, which then forces oneself to be engaged in a "right-wrong", ego-mind, conflict, because one identifies not with one's inner core or essence where there is no polarity, but with one's outer personality and ego-mind which need labels, categories and right-wrong analogs to give one one's (false) sense of self and identity.

Spirituality, on the other hand, surfaces as simply witnessing another's perspective and generates no need or desire to "fight the good fight", to be right. No ego; no mental drama. Just reading, listening, watching, and moving on, noticing, observing, witnessing with a "beginner's mind."

CORPORATE STATE OF AFFAIRS AND LESSONS

So, grounded in spirituality, one witnesses and observes what is happening in today's corporate environment from an interesting perspective. Spirituality allows one to know and understand that when the Universe wants someone to learn a lesson, be it one person, a family, a team, a corporation, and one refuses, then the Universe will deliver a rather hard "slap on the face" as a wake-up call. For the individual, this often occurs in the form of a divorce, an accident, death, loss of a job, bankruptcy, etc.

For the corporation, it can mean total demise. Practicing spirituality, a "spiritual observer" sees what is happening in the corporate world and rather than excoriate the CEO, CFO, etc., based on ego-driven mental models and beliefs about good-bad, right wrong, asks a larger question: What's the lesson/learning here for me (not for you, not for "them," but FOR ME)?

Thus a spiritual perspective can tutor the executive, and those who coach the executive, in the following ways:

1. Spirituality is an inherent need of human nature. And with a single focus on spirituality comes healing (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and creative). Without a focus on spirituality, we become spectators, bystanders who feel good about pointing fingers, judging

others, analyzing others, prescribing for others, but not being self-responsible for the betterment of people. This "feel-good-type-conversation" or perspective permeates the talk shows, Internet chats, water-cooler conversations and dinner gatherings. We hear lots of talk about "them." We allow little or no time for an honest evaluation of "me" (as it's too scary, too sensitive ...). There's lots of talk about the corporate folk, but few take the self-responsibility to "show up" in integrity and be honest and sincere in our dealings with people in our office, at our own home, at play, right here, right now.

2. On a macro level, in this country, to say the least, systems are breaking down. Education, health, environment, and corporate. No surprise. Coming from a perspective of spirituality, for me, this is as it should be. Shocked but not surprised. Why?

Folks have not gotten it on a micro level — as individuals seeped in a culture of excess, greed, toys, materialism, self-medication and the need to acquire — creating a culture of greed, corruption, dishonesty. Often, when we don't "get it" on an individual level, the Universe gives us a larger slap on the face, on a larger level. Thus, the demise of larger systems — currently, the corporate arena.

3. It's crucial to ask the question, "How am I comporting myself on a daily basis?" Again, lots of "discussion," mind stuff, information, but how many of us "walk the talk" when it comes to acting with honesty, sincerity and self-responsibility at work — right here and right now, in the past hour, the past day, the past week?

4. It's crucial to ask, "Am I showing up and acting with honesty, sincerity and integrity, according to my inner essence, my True Self, in alignment with my inner core values right here, right now in my workplace environment?"

5. The tug on our collective (corporate/business) sleeves urges us to reconsider what we value, to evaluate how so, so much of our life, our faux joy, our faux happiness, our well-being, our health, our identity, our self-image (who we take our self to be), and our ego is tied up in money, wealth, the "packaging", and the externals. "Why do I have such an inextricable attachment to money, that I can be close to ruin (mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and creatively) because of money and what it represent?"

6. Finally, it's crucial to ask one's self some tough question, when it comes to how many of us, self-righteously, pontificate about the current corporate state of affairs. "Am I being hypocritical, a phony, fraudulent, inauthentic, insincere, dishonest in **my own** everyday affairs?" For example, consider the following situations, without judgment, and then ask, "How can I tug on my own sleeve about my integrity and authenticity?" "How am I doing in my own everyday life with respect to coming from my essence, my spiritual side, my inner source and core values when I relate to others?"

Consider:

Scenario 1: Lunchtime during a busy day. It's 1:30. I go shopping and am running late. I cut into the checkout line, pay the cashier, not listening to her greeting, and dismissing her, bump into folks on the way to the parking lot, drive out cutting someone off, run a red light and make a right turn at the sign that says "no right turn between 1:00 and 3:00 pm" so that I can get back to my office and engage in a conversation about the "morals and ethics" of corporate America.

Scenario 2: Friday evening. Out to have drinks with some of the team. Spend lots of time being sarcastic to, and verbally abusing, some of the younger teammates (with what I call

my "wit" and fine sense of humor in a "just for the fun of it" or "only kidding" context) so I can appear smart and witty, while criticizing some of the staff behind their back, with the excuse that I'm just letting off steam after a hard week of work while, at the same time, presenting my "noble, moral and ethical" opinions about how to clean up corporate America.

Scenario 3: Wednesday morning 6:00 am. I'm at the gym with a buddy and rather than work out, we spend forty-five minutes watching the "babes" in their aerobics class and making lewd, sexist comments interspersed in our conversation about what's "wrong" with corporate America.

Scenario 4: Tuesday night after dinner I watch TV and some cable talk shows, which I "steal" through a "black box", resting and relaxing while watching a program on how CEOs are stealing from their companies.

Scenario 5: Friday lunch - I drive to lunch, make suggestive comments to the waitress, gorge myself with too much food, have one Vodka too many and speed back to work, endangering my self and others, so I can have a few minutes to get on the Internet and read how corporate folks are being irresponsible.

Scenario 6: Wednesday morning. I wake up late and am angry and take it out on my spouse and children, feeling every bit a victim, and behaving downright mean and nasty, while I think how the CEO being interviewed on TV this morning should be more "humane."

The point? It's not about "them." It's about me. At the end of the day, as a spiritual witness, observer, watcher, I am aware that if I take care of my spiritual self, and the next person does the same, and the next, the cataclysms that we witness will no longer rule the day. It all starts with tough questions and starts with me, right here, right now.

Spending precious time and psychic energy in moral and ethical conversations about "them" won't do it.

So, for me, this is the \$10 (spiritual) question. How am I allowing my soul to manifest right here, right now? How am I regarding my fellow employee, colleague, spouse, child, neighbor, stranger, right here, right now, this minute, today?

What's driving my do-ings and be-ings? My soul? Or my ego-driven self-images and limiting beliefs that are often tied to the past (resulting in anger, resentment, abuse, frustration, control, defensiveness, blaming, greed, pride, jealousy, argument...) or the future (fear, worry, tension, stress and anxiety)?

How much of this day, so far, have I spent analyzing, judging, and criticizing the actions, thoughts, beliefs and deeds of others (i.e., corporate folks, and others), as compared to looking inward to grow my own soul and manifest right action, right thought, and right understanding--right here, right now?

So, the challenge is for me to watch, observe and witness my self in every moment, be present and in the now, and tug on my own sleeve, rather than play at being judge and jury, being concerned with what's happening in the corporate arena (which allows me, at the end of the day, to be no more than a spectator trying to believe that I am effecting change).

Either "I" walk the talk, or I don't. It's about me, not "them."

As Gandhi said, "If you want to see change, be the change." Corporate and business change begins with each of us, the executive and the executive and coach, — right here, right now. This is what spirituality is really, really, really all about.

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