

Our personal impact ... acknowledging youth wanting more!

“The law of action and reaction is not exclusively for physics. It is also of human relations.”

—Dalai Lama

In a world beset by fear brought on by uncertainty, change and the unknown, we look to rules and the justice system to protect us. While this is as it should be in an ordered society, perhaps we should also think on how our personal impact might alleviate the frequency of new evil and the despair that causes individuals to make bad choices.

Every life has an accountability to be the best it possibly can. Fully and pleasurably investing innate and learned ability, having one's contribution accepted and accommodated, receiving adequate compensation and evolving to fullest potential are, for me, what makes for human happiness. This being so, these would be the exact same ways each of us are able to acknowledge our own existence, as well as that of others.

How good are we at this... individually and collectively?

Children enter the education system and are immediately confronted with a learning template that caters to average ability. Many parents know that a child that thinks differently has accommodation problems from the outset. Children who are different are labeled with isolating etiquettes ranging from *retarded* to *nerd*. So often critical thinking is seen as precocious, disrespectful or even troublesome. How does such a child feel?

Working with the so-called learning disabled for more than 15 years, I have come to see more often than not any pathology present is the result of our efforts to compress big picture thinking so that more average, recognizable and manageable expression might be delivered.

What happens to student iconoclasts and mavericks when they hit post secondary academia and the corporate world? Once again young people are asked to suppress their best and conform to what is expected of them rather than being

allowed to evolve to who they really are.

It is no secret that to do well academically, powers of regurgitation and compliance are essential. In most work environments, strict adherence to job descriptions and blind obedience bring the highest rewards. Oftentimes those motivated by status, wealth and acceptance *play the game* and so earn societal approval.

On the other hand, I see daily evidence of people stymied by operational environments that insist on the tried and tested, rolling out deliverables that are known to be profitable. Is there adequate recognition for those who push the envelope or who question the status quo? How often do we not feed off brilliant idea-generators, watering input down to clichéd and profitable usage, without due acknowledgement? While generating profits and providing employment are what guarantee our survival, should this be at the expense of those who think differently—those creative minds who see and believe in what might be?

On international, national and societal levels, self-interest seems the natural law that guides us—survival of the fittest. Conflict resolution and negotiation initiatives seem more geared to victory than compromise. Do we really see and understand, let alone recognize, the right to different history interpretation, value systems and experience? What example are we setting for upcoming generations?

What of those who continually question and refuse to join the herd? Are they left to roam in a wilderness unused, unloved and unseen? Think of Vincent van Gogh, the most poignant of examples. We now pay millions for his paintings that were rejected in his lifetime simply because they were departures from the norm.

Are we limiting Galileos, Da Vincis, Hemingways, Lawrences from full evolution? Does lack of recognition drive frustrated young people to make wrong



choices and break laws that we then condemn and punish with such smug self-righteousness?

Those we label as outsiders, delinquents and psychiatric cases would surely be better off if they are recognized for who they are. By acknowledging individuals who desire more, we would ease the loneliness and despair of being different, of having a greater capacity to think, feel and engage than the average person. Each of us has enormous impact in this regard.

David Lean's movie *Ryan's Daughter* had a beautiful message of a simple Irish girl who knew there was more, insisted on living it and paid the price. An example to us all.

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