

Why We're Afraid to Speak Up

For many, in childhood, very early on, when some children wanted to, or attempted to, express their aliveness, their thoughts, their juiciness, their "wisdom", their self, they were often met with resistance, first, from their parents or immediate care givers, then from extended family, then from their teachers, perhaps from clergy and others. This reactivity may have taken the form of:

"You think you're so smart!" (with a negative edge)
"Little boys/girls should be seen and not heard"
"That's the craziest thing I've ever heard"
"What do you know!!" (with a negative dismissal)
"Not now, I'm busy (i.e., what you have to say isn't important)
"Who told you that?!" (skepticism)
"Don't say such a thing" (how can you say such a thing!)
"I don't believe you."
"You better not talk like that"
"God will punish you for saying/thinking that"
"That's not a nice/good/ thing to say."
"That's not true; you're stupid"
"What a crazy idea!"
"You don't make any sense"
"You think you're so smart!(sarcastically)
"You don't think straight"
"You're crazy!"
"What makes you think that way!"
"You don't have half a brain"
"For someone so smart, you're really stupid!"
"you're an idiot!"
etc.

...and so we form this belief that what we have to offer is not "good enough", or that we are "bad", or that we are "wrong." This belief becomes an imprint, hard-wired on our brain, in our unconscious, and we carry this belief into adolescence and eventually into adulthood, like so many other self-defeating and self-sabotaging beliefs we form at this age.

So, for many people, this belief is translated the into, "What I have to say isn't important (read: I'm not important.)."

What we have done, unconsciously, is to create a self-representation, a self image, a self-concept, really, an identity, that I am not credible, or I'm not smart, or intelligent. Our belief is, "I'm the stupid one.", or (fill in the blank). So, in order to be heard, seen, recognized, "met", accepted, acknowledged or approved, many of us feel that having our own voice is not enough, that we are inadequate. So, to compensate for our sense of deficiency, we feel we have to bolster what we say and support our thoughts with other "experts' information so we can be seen as "somebody" as opposed to being a "nobody", stupid, someone who knows nothing, someone who is not very intelligent, wise, or smart.

Thus, many of us go through life silently, for example, remaining quiet at meetings, never writing our book, our poetry, our play, our music, deferring to others (the "experts"), and we remain fear-based, feeling insignificant, stupid, and frustrated, silently or overtly angry because we don't feel "heard", because we feel we don't "know enough" or "have the right information."

We just don't have a good sense of our self.

On the other hand, if we do risk speaking up or out, we feel have to have to bolster and support what we say with everyone's else's facts and information. Have you ever listened to conversations around the water cooler, on the transit systems, in social gatherings, etc., and noticed how many folks make their point by simply repeating what they've read in the papers, or heard on the talk shows, and noticed the real dearth of new or novel ideas? Many of these folks would have nothing to say if they couldn't repeat someone else's ideas or notions.

So, mired in a state of insecurity, feeling small, invisible, irrelevant, and insignificant, we either go through life quietly, like "good little boys and girls" or we speak up but first have to feel sure we have all the(ir) "facts" straight. The underlying motivation is that I would not be someone if I couldn't support my own thoughts with someone's else's thoughts. That I can't stand alone. That I can't think for my self and if I did, I would be wrong.

It's important to remember, that in every interaction, in every relationship, we are always on a "parent-child" continuum, feeling as one or the other, depending on the dynamics of the relationship. So, I ask myself, "How old do I feel?" If I feel child-like, small, threatened, inadequate, "stupid, I know I'm giving my power, my aliveness, my juiciness, my vitality, my "self" over to someone else to control. Ask, "Why?"

It's also important to remember that we bring our "family" to work, our biography and our biology. Often in interactions at work, at home, at play, in relationships, if we are self-aware and conscious, we can sense we feel like a child, young, in the face of another person across from us. This other, in some way, often unconsciously, reminds us of the reactive, judgmental, critical parent or other authority ("expert") figure who criticized us when we were young. So, we defer or else we feel we need to bolster what we say with "evidence, support, facts," in order to feel seen heard and accepted (i.e., unconsciously loved and accepted).

It's important to do the "inner work" to digest and metabolize these limiting self images and the negative energy and emotions related to them, so we can show up authentically, have our voice, our wisdom, be "adult" and be who we really are — our True, Real and authentic Self, as opposed to being the false image of "who I think I am." (i.e., the self-defeating and self-sabotaging self image, self-concept or self-representation that keeps us small, fearful, quiet, frustrated, sad, depressed, angry), voice less.

When we come from this place of our Essence, our True and Real Self, it's really not important to compare ourselves with what the "experts" have to say. What's important, is that I feel strong in and of my Self, with my inner capacity, heart- and soul-driven strength, courage, will, and confidence, to speak "my truth" and thus not be concerned or caught up in what others, the so-called "experts", think about me.

(c) 2012, Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D. and True North Partnering. All rights in all media reserved. You may reprint this article as long as the article is printed in its entirety, including the author's information

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker

and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or pvajda(at)truenorthpartnering.com, or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda