

Consciousness, unconsciousness and leadership

I'm experiencing a deep sense of sadness as I reflect on an event at the recent G8 summit meeting in Japan in July, 2008. The event was a six-course lunch followed by an eight-course dinner where the agenda was — hang on to your hat, and take a deep breath — famine and the global food crisis.

First, some details:

- Participants were served 24 different dishes during their first day at the summit — just hours after urging the world to reduce the “unnecessary demand” for food, and calling on families to cut back on their wasteful food use.
- The dinner consisted of 18 dishes in eight courses — including caviar, smoked salmon, Kyoto beef and a “G8 fantasy dessert”.
- The banquet was accompanied by five different wines from around the world, including champagne.
- African leaders — including the leaders of Ethiopia, Tanzania and Senegal, who had taken part in talks during the day — were not invited to the function.
- The dinner came just hours after a ‘working lunch’ consisting of six courses.

The lunch/dinner misstep is a metaphor for the unconscious, hypocritical and insensitive behavior many leaders and managers manifest when they espouse values that purportedly support the well-being of their organizations and then engage in the sort of excesses and unethical behavior that only undermines their integrity, respectability and credibility.

Betrayal and the corporate world of today.

Betrayal and mistrust are rampant in the corporate world today. Take, for example, corporate bosses who paint a rosy picture of the future, then show thousands of workers to the door, then pile work on the unfortunate individuals who remain. Or those who urge employees to take care of their health, then denigrate them for using the gym on ‘company time’ while expecting them to work 70-hour weeks, including weekends. Then there are those leaders who drive their organizations into the ground financially and walk away with huge bonuses and severance packages for doing so — while their employees walk away with nothing.

These and many other examples of daily betrayal are creating a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust in the workplace.

The excessive spending and lavish consumption of the G8 participants points to the difference between consciousness and unconsciousness when it comes to living life by taking the high road, to living life by following one’s inner moral compass and to living life by serving others.

Consciousness and unconsciousness defined

There are four basic levels of consciousness:

- *Not conscious* (instinctual, ego-driven) — The behavior of the G8 leaders is simply being unconscious — allowing their lower-level, ego-driven, base, and selfish desires to drive, completely unaware of the consequences and the impact on greater good’ of the community.
- *Subconscious* —habitual, robotic, reactive.
- *Conscious* — aware, intelligent, conceptual, reflective
- *Superconscious* — (intuitive, guiding, truthful, loving, universal

It's not about contempt for others. It's about being conscious! Awake! Aware!

The behavior of the G8 folks is one of being unconscious — allowing one's lower-level, ego-driven, base, instinctual, selfish and blind desires to have free reign, completely unaware of the consequences and the impact on the "larger good" of the community, of humanity.

It's not about arrogance. It's not about greed. It's not about politics. It's not about contempt for others.

It's about being conscious! Awake! Aware! It's about the fact that no one — NO ONE — said, "Wait a minute! What are we doing here? Something doesn't feel right to me." No one!

That's unconsciousness. That's being disconnected from our True and Real Self. Unconscious.

Consciousness is about spiritual (*not* theological, *not* religious) intelligence and the fundamental principles that govern the behaviors of our leaders.

It's about honesty, sincerity, self-responsibility and self-awareness.

It's about living one's core values — assuming one *has* core values and has thought consciously about how to live them at 9:00 Monday morning.

It's about integrity. It's about walking the talk. It's about being a business person and human being at the same time.

It's about taking the high road.

How does it apply to you?

Consciousness is about viewing my life right here and right now, from the 25,000-foot level and asking:

"What am I doing right here, right now?"

"Who am I being, right here, right now? Am I acting in alignment with my core values?"

"Is there harmony between what I think, say, feel and do, and if not, why not? How can I create that harmony for myself?"

"What am I thinking about and what do I think about what I'm thinking about?" "Am I 'going along to get along' even though I know it's inappropriate?"

Consciousness is simply about being decent right where I am. That's who successful and truly respected leaders and managers are.

Consciousness is simply about having and showing character and working for the highest good of all concerned, right where I am. That's what successful and truly respected leaders and managers do.

Consciousness is about showing up, authentically, with integrity, and acting to make the workplace, and the world, a better place — for everyone — even if it's uncomfortable and inconvenient. Pure and simple.

Consciousness tugs on our sleeve consistently as we reflect on the following questions:

- How aligned am I with my core values?
- When my colleagues, bosses, direct reports, clients, friends, and family observe my behavior, do they consistently observe me "walking my values talk?"

- Do I ever act in a way that others might perceive as arrogant, haughty, egotistical or greedy? If so, do I care? If not, why not?
- Do I show concern for my fellow at work, at home, at play, when I comment on the world at large, and when I'm out and about?
- At what level of consciousness do I live my life most of the time?
- Have I ever spoken up when I felt I needed to tug on someone's sleeve about their inappropriate behavior?
- Do I gloss over unethical or immoral workplace behavior as the "cost of doing business?"
- Do I exhibit the change I'd like to see everyone else exhibit?
- Have I ever betrayed another person? Have I ever been betrayed? How did I feel in either or both event(s)?

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