

Arbinger: The Choice in Intervention for Students

Story of woman- Headstone still fresh on his grave, my eldest son showed up in the middle of the night with the key to the meaning of life. In this dream where Parker appeared, I was guiding my three surviving children through a city I knew well. It was evening, I was sad and wrung out and felt pressed to get to my car, to get back home. Suddenly behind me I heard my youngest, Luc, (seven years old at the time), squealing like a newborn. Call it my Mother Bear, call it my short fuse, I swung around to snap the head off of whomever was bugging my boy. The instant I spun, lip curled and neck tensed to snarl, instead of a “Hey! Cut it out!”, I snagged on the “ow” of “out” and gasped. There, in shorts and his favorite blue t-shirt with his trademark cropped hair was 18-year-old Parker, as unscathed as the last time I’d seen him alive, the day before he died. He was playfully dangling his youngest brother over a trash can. You know that full body-and-soul whiplash that yanks you from nearly biting through someone’s jugular to buckling to your knees and kissing their feet? Melting, I lunged toward Parker, and he, (with a look that said, “Oh, Mom, you know I was just kidding around,”) handed his little brother to his sister and reached for me. His shoulders were familiar, as was his smell. Desperate, I pled, “*Tell me, honey. Tell me everything you’ve learned.*” He pulled back a bit. That mini freckle on his nose. That scar on his eyebrow. That one steely fleck in his right iris. It was my child’s face, only seasoned. I waited for words. Bending down, he whispered, “This is it,” and he took a small breath. He searched my eyes, then: “*Every relationship is to bring us to God.*” I strained. He stared. “That’s ... that’s it?” I gaped, “There’s nothing more? *Nothing else?*” His soft eyes remained fixed. And the dream closed.

Today I want to talk about difficult relationships- those in which we must correct and teach. I want to talk about how we can use these relationships to bring us closer to God.

What is self-betrayal? The most important intervention occurs in my heart as I allow it to be pierced by the humanity of others.

Nothing I can do will help others cease their self-betrays as much as simply ceasing my own.

THE CHOICE DIAGRAM:

“When I choose to act contrary to my own sense of what is appropriate, I commit an act of self-betrayal. It is a betrayal of my own sense of the right way to act in a given situation – not someone else’s standard, but what I myself feel is right in the moment.”

“ An act to betray myself is a choice to go to war because when I betray myself I create within myself a new need- a need that causes me to see others accusingly, a need that causes me to care about something other than truth and solutions, and a need that invites others to do the same in response.”

At this point I enter what is referred to by Arbingler as a “box.”

What about in situations where I have truly been mistreated or abused by others? Read p. 101 in Anatomy

Imaculee Ileebagiza, Ten Boom sisters

Victor Frankl

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=228358261269929>

Although nothing I can do in the present can take away the mistreatment of the past, the way I carry myself in the present determines how I carry forward the memories of those mistreatments. When I see others as objects, I dwell on the injustices I have suffered in order to justify myself, keeping my mistreatments and suffering alive within me. When I see others as people, on the other hand, then I free myself from the need for justification. I therefore, free myself from the need to focus unduly on the worst that has been done to me. I am free to leave the worst behind me, and to see not only the bad but the mixed and good in others as well.”

Story of boy who had the cows

“Yes, some people make the choice very difficult, but difficult choices are still choices. No one, whatever their actions, can deprive me of the ability to choose my own way of being. Difficult people are nevertheless people and it always remains in my power to see them that way.”

Story of man watching football game, Story of father whose baby is crying in the night Lou and car in the Hudson, dad and Joanna’s 3rd wreck in 3 months

Sometimes we cannot do what our heart desires to do.

“Whether or not we have performed a particular service the way we can know if we have betrayed ourselves is whether we are still desiring to be helpful.” Mosiah- King Benjamin

Read Romans 12:10-21 – overcome evil with good

Read John 13:34

All of us are at times RESISTANT and at other times RESPONSIVE. This means that sometimes when we feel we should do things; we respond and do them. Other times, we resist doing what we know we should do.

Question: Can you think of a time when you knew how you should respond, didn't respond that way and then justified it?

Sticky Note Graphs- did this happen with family, friends, strangers.... Which is most common
Do I BLAME, or do I UNDERSTAND. When I am in the resistant way of being, I BLAME. When I am in the responsive way of being, I UNDERSTAND.

Something to consider:

When I interact with people who have troubles, with people who have made mistakes, with people who are resistant, am I blaming, or understanding?

Am I humbled by the remembrance of my *own* troubles, mistakes, and resistance, or do I feel indignant at the severity of *theirs*?

Do I ALWAYS see them as people to help? Or do I sometimes see them as objects to blame?

Does it help to try to change others?

"I won't invite others to change if my interactions with them are primarily to get them to change."

"In the way we regard our children, our spouses, neighbors, colleagues, and strangers we choose to see others either as people like ourselves or as objects. They either count like we do or they don't. In the former case, since we regard them as we regard ourselves, we say our hearts are at peace toward them. In the latter case, since we systematically view them as inferior, we say our hearts are at war."

Heidegger called the way of being when we see others as people as the **I- Thou** way, and the way of being when we see others as objects as the **I-It** way.

Do you see everyone else as a person equal to you?

- Story of driving in Washington DC
- Sister Graham doing my laundry
- Grant parking in the far parking lot- no marked parking spaces
- A family sending over someone to do my yard, clean, organize,

Elder Eyring, "When you meet someone treat them as if they are in serious trouble and you'll be right more than half the time."

(story of being at a bishopric party- "I wish I had your life")

Two ways to intervene: When I BLAME in the way I intervene to help others, I invite RESISTANCE

When I UNDERSTAND in the way I intervene to help others, I invite RESPONSIVENESS, COOPERATION. One way I am dealing with OBJECTS, the other way I am helping people.

Example: If you forgot about an assignment, or procrastinated doing it, then your parent found out, what response would illicit cooperation from you? Telling you it was your fault or empathizing with you and asking you if you can think of something you would do differently next time?

Author Toni Morrison, in an interview, remembered having been the young mother who, when her kids walked into the room, scanned them up and down looking for faults. She'd be thinking, *Tuck in your shirt*, or *Comb your hair*. She felt that her critical stance meant she was caring for them, which I get only too well. Morrison then offered another approach. She said, "Let your face speak what's in your heart. When they walk in the room my face says 'I'm glad to see you'. It's just as small as that."

Seeing others as people: In order to help people who have been entrusted to my care, sometimes it may be necessary to engage in "hard" behavior toward them. But this is different than seeing them as objects.

"Whatever I do on the surface, people respond to WHO I am being when I am doing it."

More important than what we do, it is HOW we do things that matter: "Generally speaking, we respond to others way of being toward us rather than to their behavior. Which is to say that (others) respond more to how we're regarding them than they do to our particular words or actions. We can treat others fairly, for example, but if our hearts are warring toward them while we're doing it, they won't think they're being treated fairly at all. In fact, they'll respond to us as if they weren't being treated fairly."

"Most problems at home, at work, and in the world are not failures of strategy but failures of way of being."

(We come home from work and we don't even have to say anything- people can immediately sense that we are "grumpy")

Seeing everyone else as a person does not mean that we allow them to continue to do self-damaging things. We don't turn our heads while they abuse themselves, others or us, because we understand that allowing that to continue will not be the best for them.

I CAN DO ALMOST ANY BEHAVIOR IN EITHER WAY

PERSONAL STORY-

I planned, after an orderly dinner with no squabbling and no stern look from me, to gather our two little children around the fireplace, read them a story, tuck them into bed, and tell them I loved them. My train was an hour late. When I finally got home, I went through the door determined to be cheerful and kind. But dinner wasn't on the table. Marsha wasn't even getting it ready. It was her turn to fix it, too. Was she waiting for me to do it? For a moment I felt I ought to help her out. But then I just got bitter. How could I be the kind of father I'm supposed to be in this kind of mess? I felt like letting out a bellow, but I didn't. I never do. I did what I always do. I hung up my coat (so there would be at least one thing put away in the house) and went to work cleaning up the mess. First, I put the children in the bath and got them properly bathed. Then I did the dishes and put away clothes and vacuumed everywhere. Marsha said, "Please stop, will you?" I'm sure she felt humiliated to have me pitch in when she had obviously been wasting time. People who don't act responsibly are going to feel humiliated by people who do. But I didn't say anything back. Maybe I should have given her "what for" or not helped her at all. But I wasn't going to stoop to her level. And I tried hard not to have an angry expression, even though it was hard. I'm above pouting and tantrums and that sort of thing. It took til 10:00. When we went to bed Martha was still upset. After all these years, I know her well enough to know that no matter how hard I worked, she still wouldn't have appreciated it.

"We can lie with our lips but we tell the truth with the face we make when we lie." Nietzsche

Pyramid and principles of Pyramid "I become an agent of change only to the degree that I live to help things go right rather than to simply correct things that are going wrong. If I don't work the bottom part of the pyramid, I won't be successful at the top."

Peacemaking Pyramid Lessons:

- 1) Most time and effort should be spent at the lower levels of the pyramid
- 2) The solution to the problem at one level of the pyramid is always below that level of the pyramid.
- 3) Ultimately, my effectiveness at each level of the pyramid depends of the deepest level of the pyramid- my way of being.

Please share – WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THINGS GO RIGHT? Look at each level for just a moment. Talk with a partner about some ways that you could strengthen or improve at one of

these levels. Do 1-3-6 activity with ways you can help things go right at each level of the pyramid. Record this in journal.