

The Examined Life -- The Rules We Live By -- Edition 20, April, 2006

A free, electronic newsletter brought to you by:

Debra Exner, CPCC
Business & Personal Coach
Exner & Associates
Examine, Explore and Excel!
602-298-1129
www.ExnerAssociates.com

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The Rules We Live By

"How about painting the fireplace red?" asked Arline. "Right now it just blends in and gets lost. Red would make it pop."

Red. Hmmm. The red wall in George's office had worked out well. I trusted Arline's sense. She had done a great job with rearranging our furniture to make a much more pleasing look.

But this would make quite a statement. We did a test of the red paint with brown glaze over it to tone it down and set it on the mantle to study for a few days. And then we decided to go for it.

I felt quite comfortable with the decision until a day or so before we were to begin painting. I had a sense of nervousness in my stomach when I thought about it and wondered what that was about. Then, I remembered my Dad saying "Always go with neutral colors. They're practical, flexible and won't make the landlord unhappy."

How interesting. I had an old rule hanging around in my head and hadn't realized it. It made sense when I was a kid. We moved frequently and were always renting. Did it make sense now? To be perfectly honest, decorating style wasn't my parent's forte. Nor is it mine. That's why I'd asked Arline for advice.

This is a simple example of the beliefs and rules we carry around unconsciously. A more striking and important one for me was the extremely negative gut reaction I had when my husband first suggested moving to Arizona. It was swift and powerful. I had a mental image of myself driving a car that was hurtling down a steep hill as I was slamming on the brakes and pulling back on the steering wheel and screaming "Nooooooo!"

Because my reaction was so strong I noticed it right away and thought it was curious. It was rooted, at least in part, in those frequent childhood moves. I didn't know if I

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wanted to move but I knew that I didn't want to make the decision based on some knee-jerk reaction.

Unexamined, these silent rules and beliefs can influence our choices, and not necessarily for the best. According to Marcia Reynolds in *Outsmart Your Brain* tuning in to the present and noticing our emotions is an important first step.

Marcia writes:

Any time I catch myself contemplating the past, fearing the future or worrying about how others are judging me, I can deliberately alter my state of mind by practicing the four steps listed below. You will find most athletes use steps similar to these to warm up for competition, to bring their brains and bodies into harmony before they make their move.

The four steps include:

1. Relax your body.
 2. Detach from the thoughts running in your head.
 3. Bring the Center of your body into your awareness.
 4. Focus on how you want to feel and how you want your story to end.
- (end of excerpt)

We had a lively discussion group on this book during the month of April. It has helped us to notice our thinking and emotional patterns and make better choices.

Oh, by the way, the move to Arizona is a success and the red fireplace looks great!

Personal Update

Next week I leave for Shanghai China for a few weeks to visit my son Chris and fellow WWB past-president and friend Sherry Read. I'm looking forward to the trip! I'll have limited access to email and no phone service until I return in mid-May so bear with me if my response slows down! I'll be sure to write about it in the next issue.

Coming Events

***Fierce Conversations* Book Discussion**

Dates: Wednesdays May 25, 30, June 7, 14, 21 & 28

Time: 3:30-4:30 pm AZ Time/PDT, 6:30-7:30 pm EDT

Group Size: 8-10 people

Fee: \$125 (Book available from amazon.com for @ \$10); Early bird price: \$75 if registered by 5/15

Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time, by Susan Scott, is a powerful book on communication, self-development and leadership. Synonyms for the word *fierce* are robust, intense, strong, powerful, passionate, eager and unbridled.

The author writes:

Our lives succeed or fail gradually, then suddenly, one conversation at a time. While

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no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a business, a marriage or a life, any single conversation can. The conversation is the relationship.

Scott teaches you how to:

- Overcome barriers to meaningful communication
- Expand and enrich conversations with colleagues, friends, and family
- Increase clarity and improve understanding
- Handle strong emotions -- on both sides of the table

Join us and explore the seven principles of Fierce Conversations. We'll divide the book into six sections, do the exercises and discuss a different part of the process each week.

[Click on this link to register via a faxed form or call 602-298-1129](#)

Many of my clients come to me because they want to increase their satisfaction with their work – they want to transition to a different career, their job has ended and they need to find new work, they want to start their own business, they want their current business to stop running their entire lives or they may be in a life transition that has them thinking about what's next (i.e., the kids have grown, they want to partially retire, etc).

If you are ready to make changes in your business and personal life or know someone who is, I'm looking for you. I work primarily with people in career transition and with self-directed individuals and business owners who want to maximize their effectiveness and satisfaction at work while maintaining a healthy life/work balance. Curious? Email me at DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com or call 602-298-1129 to schedule a complimentary 45-minute coaching session.

If you are enjoying this newsletter, please forward it to your friends and colleagues! Or direct them to the subscription form and past issues at www.exnerassociates.com

Thanks,

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www.ExnerAssociates.com
phone# 602-298-1129

How did you go bankrupt? Gradually, then suddenly.
— Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

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