

January 13, 2010 Open Mic Recap “You Missed a Great Conversation”

Highlights: In our household, we said “*you missed a great meal*” when my stepson or I weren’t able to be at the dinner table. Of course, it was meant both as a subtle jibe to him or me, as well as a heart-felt compliment to the chef. This past Wednesday’s Open Mic reminded me of that phrase, because the conversation was so juicy, flavorful, and satisfying that if you weren’t there, well, you missed a great conversation. I’ll recap what we talked about and, because we only got through the first several “courses” I had prepared, I’ll list the full menu --so you can prepare your own great meal. But be sure to join us for the next Open Mic, on January 27 at Noon eastern time – *and invite other members of your team; there’s room at the Open Mic table!*

Recap:

Centering Meditation As always, we began with a 45-60 second closed-eye meditation (except for anyone who might have called into OM on their cell while driving). Participants noted how refreshing and calming it is to take this kind of mini-break from the hurly-burly. When they tell me that, they’re singing my song. There’s a lovely little book by David Kundtz, Ph.D., called ***Quiet Mind: One-Minute Retreats from a Busy World*** that has dozens of mini-breaks. Check it out at http://www.amazon.com/Quiet-Mind-One-Minute-Retreats-World/dp/1573248622/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1263570582&sr=8-2.

“The Melody Lingers On”: I quoted that Irving Berlin lyric (from “The Song is Ended”) as a way of inquiring about what lingers for each of us from the holidays. People mentioned; the richness of gathering with friends and family members (seeming to overdose on it at times – Do we really have to see Uncle Bob? Couldn’t we just stay home?); the opportunity to read *fiction* (presumably as opposed to *spreadsheets*) and, in one instance, “to go to the office only four hours each day.” (Can we book him a cruise or something?) What lingers for me is treasuring the “screeching halt” (aka: no appointments) for a week, and feeling like I reacquainted myself with *exhaling*. It’s a nice feeling, and I am continuing to cultivate it, even during appointments.

Does the idea of “a new year” have meaning for you – and if so, what are some strategic goals, resolutions, or intentions?

“Staying small and focused, and servicing our clients.” This planner had used my chapter on “an appreciative year-end review” to conduct such a conversation within his firm, and they reaffirmed their strategy and savored how much they enjoy the clients they serve. He also wondered aloud, “Who takes care of the Care-Taker (i.e., planners, and those they serve)?” He noted, and others agreed, how stressful and heart-rending it is to witness clients who have health issues (cancer diagnoses are frequently mentioned); he and others on the call cited Open Mic as one prime venue for self-care. That’s why I created Open Mic, of course, although its benefits, from what you tell me, extend beyond self-care to

other benefits of being in community (e.g., learning from others, forming relationships, knowing you're not alone out there, sharing ideas, testing new thoughts and plans, etc.). This planner noted that he and his staff members sit together and review OM Recaps (whether or not he's attended that OM hour) and discuss its relevance for them. I was not only flattered but inspired; I blurted out, "Why don't you invite all of them, come as a group to Open Mic!"

And that is my **open invitation to all readers of this (and any) Open Mic Recap.** Attend as a group (some have done so, upon occasion) or, if that's not feasible, consider rotating, or pairing up and calling in. The more the merrier, and the richer!

Another attendee waxed philosophical about milestone events like a new year: "I want my renewal to be more integral, more sensitive to my rhythms, my practice, my aging, rather than being calendar-driven."

I couldn't agree more. *And* (rather than "*But*") I also have immense gratitude and thankfulness for anything – including arbitrary markers like the new year, birthdays, anniversaries – that allows and encourages me to wake up, take stock, savor what I have, plan for what I aspire to, and go for it. Truly, I get by with a little help (okay, a lot of help) from my friends – including arbitrary markers. *And* I aspire to have my renewals, as he said, be more inner-directed: truly a Both/And, for me.

What are you encouraged about in 2010 (whether it be personal, the firm, clients, family, the economy, etc)?

Attendees cited a sense or hope that things will get better, and that the 'recovery' will gain traction. The conversation, however, took a sharp turn towards the global, as one attendee noted the unimaginable suffering of Haitians that is just beginning to be evident, as information regarding the earthquake becomes more known. As he noted, "It puts into perspective the inconvenience of waiting around for my car to be repaired, and the 'misfortune' of my very wealthy clients who are now marginally less wealthy than they had been...but are still some of the wealthiest people on the planet." Others noted the level of pain and distress that planners showed at last year's Retreat and the 2008 annual convention, with some saying "Why didn't we stop it? Why didn't we see it coming?" As one OMer noted, there are forces greater than us that are operating, both in the macro-economy and in earthquakes. We didn't solve the world's large problems or help Haitians in this OM Hour, but the enormity of their plight to our awareness, and putting into perspective our own situations, is terribly important.

Closing Meditation:

I led a 45-second closing meditation (thank you, Mary Gibson, for suggesting a closing meditation as a great way of bringing OM to a fitting end, and prompting attendees to take whatever blessings they found in that hour out to their worlds). I invited each of us to breathe mindfully, become aware of how we were feeling and what we had gained, and imagine taking those gifts out to the next people and situations we encountered. Rather

than having a final verbal go-round, we silently brought OM to a close and quietly went about our respective ways. (Interestingly, I received emails from almost all the attendees, saying how much they had gained from this hour; very gratifying for me. Please join us for the next OM meal, on Wednesday, January 27 at Noon. Don't miss a great meal!)

The Rest of the Menu and Ingredients for Holding Your Own Great Conversation:

We could easily have continued on for another hour. Here are the additional questions that I had prepared. Add them to the questions in **bold** above, and gather your colleagues, family members, friends, any collection of folks, and grow your own conversations:

Does “a new year” have meaning for you? Care to share your 2010 New Year’s Resolutions, Strategic Goals, Intentions, etc?

- What are you doing, what supports do you have in place?
- What needs to happen, to make it so?

Thinking about 2010: What are you encouraged about in 2010: personal, the firm, clients, family, economy, etc?

What are you concerned about in 2010: things you need to be mindful of, and not be caught off-guard by?”

- What, if anything, can and should you be doing about them?”

Closing Centering Practice (or a go-round of “a high point of this conversation for me.”)