

This Appreciative Hour:
July 15, 2009 Open Mic Recap...and More

Harvesting the OM Highlights:

When people gather in community, listen with openness and compassion, and discuss important questions, a kind of magic happens. In this week's Open Mic, we discussed participants' most satisfying actions or decisions in the last six months. We discovered remarkable similarities, if not in content, then in underlying themes and meanings. Read on for details, including one participant's story of her journey back to her True North. Her story may inspire you to search for your own.

July 15, 2009 Open Mic Recap:

Centering Practice:

I began with a one-minute centering practice, to enable participants to bring more of themselves to the Open Mic conversation; to gather the parts of ourselves that got scattered and misplaced on the freeway, or stuck in a client file. I do this at the start of OM for two reasons: one, to establish greater presence for the ensuing conversation; and two: to model for participants how to begin conversations in a way that sets the stage for deeper, more authentic, and more productive conversations.

This week's one-minute meditation was simple and powerful. I invited people to close their eyes and listen to my words as they followed their breathing:

Breathing in, I feel calm.

Breathing out, I feel at ease.

Breathing in, I feel calm in my body.

Breathing out, I feel at ease in my body.

Breathing in, I feel calm in my mind.

Breathing out, I feel at ease in my body.

In, calm.

Out, ease.

I then invited them to continue on their own for a few breaths, silently repeating, "In, calm. Out, ease."

Participants appreciated the reminder to be present, one was grateful for "the guided tour of mind and body," and another became more relaxed and alert. I invite you to try this meditation, by yourself or with others. It literally takes one minute. How many times does someone ask, "*Got a minute?*" and you give it freely? Why not make that request of yourself, and use that minute to center yourself for the next task, phone call, or meeting?

Open Mic Conversation:

I noted the six-month anniversary of Open Mic, which began on January 14, 2009. I invited people to think about "*a decision or action that you've taken in the past six months that you are feeling particularly good about; it could be a major decision you made, a step you took in an action plan, a response to a crisis situation, or anything else, large or small?*" Then I invited anyone who wished to, to share their story.

One person, a financial educator in a large company which is "downsizing like crazy," told us of a "divide" in his skill set that he is learning to explore and possibly bridge, in preparation for his own next calling. (He, too, is being downsized. Dumb term, isn't it?) As a generalist/educator, he is adept at presenting to and facilitating groups. In that role, he doesn't provide individual advice. Yet, he has been approached by various downsized employees with the request to meet with them to help them make a specific post-termination plan. He made the decision to grant their requests; the 1:1s have proved valuable and generated word-of-mouth demand for more, which is he doing (and enjoying). He realized that he had done a lot of individual counseling in a prior career and that he could call upon those skills and reframe himself as not being "just an educator."

Another is nearing the completion of her counseling internship (she also has a finance background). As part of the internship, she decided to create a financial counseling group; additionally, she has done a small amount of individual financial counseling. As a result of the experience, she is searching for a way to have a dual practice - psychological counseling and financial counseling - in a way which avoids a professional conflict of interest (which prohibit the practitioner offering other services to her psychological counseling clients. She would have to create a firewall between the two business segments.) counseling. After she noted that she also has

a masters degree in divinity, the comment was made that "It sounds like it's a ministry for you" to do the financial counseling in addition to psychotherapy.

A third participant reported that his decision to do a webinar for Advisor Products led to FPA asking him to offer a related webinars, which has led to other fruitful connections, and new clients. It was a gratifying story of how one good thing leads to another, but you have to take the first step towards that first "good thing." As the sign in the casino says, *"You Must Be Present to Win."*

A fourth participant related a moving and inspiring story of how she had used the last six months to once again inhabit her personal True North. As a financial planner, she had followed her intuition last year, and moved clients to cash (*before* September). Then, in the face of the economic tsunami last autumn, with high-status financial analysts/researchers talking about historical trends and advocating that investors hold steady, "I lost my True North. I believed *them* rather than *myself*." Eventually, she came back to her center, apologized to her clients for foregoing her intuition, and recommitted herself to (a) a focus on the person's life plan and what's important to them, rather than what the media say should be important, and (b) a cash focus. Her wise lesson for herself was *"Be who you are. It's why clients hire you. If you go against it, they will leave you."* (A powerful life lesson, as well as a business lesson learned in response to a specific episode.) One participant noted how powerful it must have been to model self-awareness and authenticity for clients; to teach them to trust, and unapologetically use, their own way of making decisions (whether it be via intuition, analysis, turning to reliable trusted advisors, or other).

With the OM hour nearing an end, I came back to the first storyteller, to pursue a thought I had bookmarked. I noted that he had said that some financial planners who are adept at conducting individual financial planning conversations may be very uncomfortable with group education, seminars, etc., and that they could benefit from improving those skills. I recollected that I had attended his presentation on seminar planning and delivery, at a Money Quotient Retreat, and found it incredibly substantial and useful. I posed the question, *"Who better than you to offer such seminars and webinars to financial planners? Maybe that's part of your next calling."*

Have you ever *heard* a face break out in a smile, on the phone? I believe I did, as the "duh-ness" of the suggestion sank in. Many others on the call expressed

interest in such an offering, and I suggested I might schedule a special Open Mic session for that purpose. Readers; please let me know if you would be interested in such an offering.

All in all, a remarkable Open Mic hour (75 minutes, actually), made possible by: the receptive and respectful container we all created and held; the courageous and open sharing of everyone; and the group members' generous listening. It just goes to show, whoever shows up are the right people.

You, too, can be one of "the right people." Please join us **next Wednesday, July 22, 2009 at Noon eastern. Call 1-219-509-8322, passcode 202779#.**

Ed's Further Reflections:

Resilience is a huge topic these days. We hear about resilient people, resilient organizations, resilient communities, resilient communities, resilient information systems, and more. I suppose the timing is not coincidental; we have so much need for "bounce-back-ability," because we have had so much to bounce back from, these last 10 months. One way to think about **Open Mic** is as a forum for helping people to find community and, in so doing, tap into their own resilient qualities. I'll have more to say about the topic of resilience in future posts. For now, I want to introduce you to Joe Kroog, a guy who showed remarkable resilience in the face of job loss, and prevailed. I was impressed by his story, in last Sunday's New York Times. (Check it out at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/jobs/12pre.html>.) I was also impressed that the Times would run a story of individual coping and success -- in its Business Section, no less. That's not the Times' usual bent. It must be a sign of the times (oops, no pun intended, really) that we're living in.

I wish you a happy and productive week, in which you serve others (and yourself) with kindness, patience, skill and, if required, resilience.

Coming Attractions of next week's "Further Reflections," Some thoughts on community and on not "going it alone."

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