

Power vs. Control

She who is being questioned has the power. He who asks the questions is in control. The questioner delegates the power to the responder and she is free to respond honestly because the questioner does not judge or relate. When the responder feels safe or comfortable, she delegates back to the questioner control over the direction of the conversation.

Picture having a pleasant conversation with a great white shark while you are out for a leisurely swim. Is he interested in your thoughts or your safety? On April 22, 2014, Adam Walker was swimming New Zealand's Cook Strait as part of the Oceans Seven mission. He wants to become only the 2nd swimmer ever to cross the Seven Oceans.

Suddenly he noticed a swimming partner just below his outstretched arms parallel to his body, it was a great white shark. Fortunately someone had his back. Cook said that 10 dolphins immediately surrounded him, which caused the shark to back off a distance. Those dolphins stayed with Mr. Walker for over an hour before the shark eventually left for good.

The irony is that Walker's mission was partially to benefit Whale and Dolphin Conservation; perhaps they sensed the connection.

Talking to someone who grabs both power and control is like swimming with the sharks. Think about the last time you met a persuasive salesperson. Did you have permission to say no? Were your opinions, thoughts, and desires truly sought? Were they considered and honored? If no, did you feel trust towards the salesperson?

Bob, the production manager, uses a technique called 'drive-by delegating' with his team. It's more like drive-by dumping according to the recipients of his so-called delegation. Whenever Bob starts his rounds, those associated with Bob turn on their cloaking devices because Bob won't seek understanding or clarity, he will just tell you what to do.

No member of the team is given permission to opine, question, or seek direction. Bob is a man on mission, so he never gives permission for others to think while sharing his space, however, they are required to be in his ship and go along for the ride.

How safe is it swimming in Bob's water? He does not ask questions for understanding but rather to respond, demand, and pontificate. It's like a communication blind spot and he is not aware of it.

To be effective and develop emotional intimacy with someone, a questioner must relinquish power. This is resisting the urge to answer and make decisions in behalf of the other person.

Cortni is frustrated with her teenage daughter. The only approach that seems to garner a reaction is nagging and a steady barrage of criticism. Her daughter's room is always a mess (so was Cortni's at that age), she is usually late for everything (is this behavior surprising for a teenager or an adult?), and recently she's taken to mouthing off at her mom (it doesn't make it right, but it is understandable).

The most productive space between two people is emotional intimacy (mutual trust and respect). If you are in sales, management, parenting, marriage, or deal with people in any way, you are in a position where emotional intimacy is critical for success.

Control is manifested only over the direction of the conversation and not over the person. Controlling the direction of a conversation is orchestrating a space of neutrality between you and the other person.

Neither Cortni nor Bob understand neutrality or the importance of emotional intimacy. Neither is aware that people do not feel safe in conversations with them. They have been conditioned since childhood to persuade others to see it their way (they are attached to being right). They are agreement-seeking missiles with in-your-face warheads attached.

When a parent, spouse, salesperson, or manager uses manipulation or persuasion to influence a decision, he/she removes the ability for the child, spouse, prospect, or team member to say yes. The responder is really shark bait and not viewed as a human. Workplace bullies are especially guilty of this type of behavior.

A person can never say yes until she can say no. Most people, when trying to be persuasive, feel the need to take both positions during the conversation. The first position is control and the second position is power.

Master marriages, effective parents, sales professionals, and leaders use emotional intimacy as a foundation for transforming life. It is primary in their approach. Happy and successful people understand that trust is a key ingredient to success; in fact it's a currency.

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