



September 21, 2017

Re-examining our Values

- *Challenge yourself to re-examine your values and then challenge yourself again to align your actions with them*

As we responsibly engage in our day to day activities as supervisors, managers, administrators and leaders, it is easy to set aside the actions that align with values deeply important to us. In our **Leadership Challenge** workshop, each leader participates in an exercise to help the leader identify the values driving behavior. Research shows that clarity of personal values helps leaders feel more engaged with their organization, even if the personal values are not completely aligned or even slightly aligned with the organization. Higher engagement leads to higher leadership effectiveness.

This powerful exercise inspires me every time and recently encouraged me to step back again and consider my values and to what extent I was taking action to demonstrate them. I wrote the below a year ago. My mother passed away suddenly in March 2017.

My mother is now 80 years old. And I adore her. Over the past 6 months, my 3 siblings and I have arranged for her to seek some medical guidance from the “Center for the Aging Brain” at New York University Hospital. Mom is ok; however, we have noticed her struggling with remembering words a bit more over the past 8-12 months than before. Therefore, we engaged the services of “The Center for the Aging Brain”. Moving through this process, I asked mom if we could have breakfast every Sunday morning. As a business owner, I have a demanding schedule with lots of travel. What I want to be sure NOT to do, is to place time that I value with my mother below where it belongs. So, having Sunday breakfasts ensures that we have a good “catch up” every week. A recent activity in one of our leadership workshops inspired me to ask my mother more questions about her childhood on this day. My mother (born and raised in Birkenhead, England) lost a brother (drowned at sea) when she was only 17 years old. Her beloved brother was only 21 years old. He was a family favorite and according to my mother, her mother’s favorite too! As my mother said, “his death changed everything”. Today, I asked my mother about Stuart’s funeral. What was it like? How did her mother and father make it through? What did his death do to them and to her? For the first time, we cried together over this. I NEVER knew my uncle. However, as she described him, I couldn’t help thinking she was describing my 23-year-old son. Maybe it was for that reason, that I felt so emotionally attached...and the horror of losing a brother to my mother, the child to my grandparents...and then of course, me thinking of the horror of losing a child was overwhelming. As we moved through the tears, I asked my mom how this event impacted her life...and we re-examined how she met my American father in England and at the age of 20 married him in England and moved to the United States to be with him. My father had offered to stay in England. She instead offered to relocate to America with him. Today, my mom said, she probably wanted to “get away” ... and we both understood it was probably lingering from her brother Stuart’s death.

After returning home from our breakfast, I spoke to my son (who also moved 3,000 miles away to Northern California in August 2015) I told him about my conversation with my mother. He was immediately drawn into the story and wanted to know more. After telling him, I remembered I have one item that my mom gave me years ago that belonged to my Uncle Stuart. It is a tiny leather encased compass that my uncle used when sailing. My son, like my uncle is an adventurer. His 23rd birthday is in two weeks. I told him I am going to send him this compass. Our values guide us as we move through life. For now, I hope this compass will remind my son of that. And I expect, his own internal compass and value for family will always keep him



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- Aligning actions with values



connected to us. I am lucky. Unlike my grandmother and grandfather, I get to sail through this journey of life with him.

