

4-NO QUESTION SHOULD GO UNANSWERED

This is the last in a series of Reflections dedicated to answering questions raised about the work of organizations that base their work on the Principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought as discovered and taught by Sydney Banks.

Previous essays addressed: (1) Why does this differ from other work that links thought to reality and experience? (2) Why is finding respect, rapport and deeper human feelings within oneself central to all interactions, regardless of the subject-matter or of the circumstances? (3) Doesn't it suggest false hope to talk about "innate health" in a medical setting where people are suffering and dying from disease every day? (4) Given the abysmal conditions in much of the world today – war, human rights violations, cruelty, prejudice, random violence – how could there actually be health in all people?

The question for this essay is: Where is the scientific evidence, the published research, the documentation for this work? How can you demonstrate that what you're doing helps people?

It would be wonderful to be able to fast forward time for 20 years and already have in hand the scientific evidence and published research about this work. But we are at the beginning of that process, which will involve longitudinal studies, blind studies, much debate about the most essential questions to pursue, and development of research protocols and questions for generations to come. A major initiative of those who work with the Principles is to engage in solid research with qualified research partners in the behavioral sciences, in medicine and in other disciplines to design and implement studies.

The documentation is available and has been for years, in anecdotal information that is so provocative that it demands scientific study. It would be difficult for me to imagine a comparable array of highly visible outcomes of an approach to problems in any other field of endeavor that would not lead to an outcry for study and further development and insistence on more teaching.

An example that comes to mind for me is a business example. Years ago, when I was a newspaper editor, I served on a committee to consider computerizing our library. Our library was a sloppy combination of deteriorating paper and microfilm. The idea of information storage and retrieval for general use via computers was relatively new at that time, as most computers were limited in use to scientific purposes. The committee was skeptical. Computers were a scary unknown. The technology was still in development and was very expensive. The people talking about it were difficult to comprehend and quite sure of themselves. They weren't talking our language and they were so confident of the efficacy of computers over all other systems that they didn't have a lot of patience for our ruminations about improving our current paper and microfilm storage as a step along the way.

At some point in our deliberations, we were able to visit a pilot program where a computer information storage and retrieval system was in use. As soon as we saw it, we knew that it was right. Our minds had been engaged in dialogue about *whether* to pursue this idea. When we saw it in action, our minds turned to dialogue about *how* to pursue this idea. It addressed all our problems: The loss of loose clippings; papers getting torn, worn and faded; microfilm being slow and tedious and difficult to sort through to find small details; people not doing sufficient research because it took so long and was so frustrating; things getting misfiled when they were returned ... In the computerized library we visited, people could find every reference to a term within a matter of moments; comparable materials could be brought up side by side on a screen for quick review; things could be printed if need be in a flash, or returned to storage with the flick of a key; those using the system seemed engaged and absorbed in it, rather than frustrated. When we talked to some of them, they expressed delight and told many stories of how their work had benefited from the system.

We were not looking at an improvement on the existing world of information management. We were looking at an entirely new world of information management. We were sold, based on what we could see with our own eyes and the ability of those using the system to recount its value to them clearly in their own words.

Within a few short years, computerized libraries were common. Demand for them grew rapidly from the positive experiences everyone had with them. The demand generated creativity in development of ever more user-friendly systems, increased accessibility and affordability of the systems, and a huge elevation in the value and use of stored information by people who legitimately needed to find things in a hurry on deadline.

Similarly, from the earliest efforts (mid 1970's) to share the understanding of how we create reality to awaken well-being in people, visible outcomes have transcended norms for what had previously been called improvement in people's quality of life experience. Many thousands of people in helping professions have seen this with their own eyes, gathered information from those who have benefited from the understanding, and left behind systems they used to use and continually try to improve. Just as there was a limit to how much improvement was possible in a paper filing system and our committee had to see that a whole new system, with a whole new set of assumptions, would be a leap into a entirely different way of working with information, people have seen the possibility of an entirely different standard for human well-being.

Because I had a strong background in newspaper work, which included several years as a tough investigative reporter, I approached those who were enthusiastically promulgating this new vision of service to mankind with skepticism and an eye for what was wrong. It looked Pollyanna, too facile, too "nice" to solve the serious problems people face. I expected to find the flaws and "expose" it for what it was.

It has become my life's work because I changed while I was looking to find out how impossible it would be for people to change. I didn't think I needed to change; I didn't have any interest in changing; I didn't think I should change. I was a busy, hard-working, driven, successful person with all the trappings of life in place. I didn't think of myself as a downtrodden person, or a mental patient, or a candidate for social work or any kind of intervention to improve me.

It had never occurred to me that there was such a thing as unconditional happiness. It had never occurred to me that my well-being was not in any way attached to all the goodies in my life. It had never occurred to me that unconditional love was more powerful than unrelenting drive and determination. It had never occurred to me that I could be quietly effective, calm and graceful in my everyday interactions, consistently creative at problem-solving, and confident and happy without pushing myself beyond my physical and emotional limits. It had never occurred to me that I was the thinker of my own thoughts, and that my thoughts were coming to life as my reality, rather than reality making me think whatever I thought. It had never occurred to me that life flows through me and I use that universal energy to create and change my version of life every moment.

When I talked to all kinds of people whose lives had changed quickly and dramatically because those things had occurred to them, I was amazed, but still skeptical. I met former mental patients who had been in and out of treatment for years, who were happier and more at peace within themselves than I had ever dreamed of being. I met people who had transcended chronic pain and were living in a state of well-being that seemed impossible, given their diagnoses. I met people who had been so stressed they were sure suicide was the only option who were relaxed, easy-going and more successful than they had ever imagined. I was looking for what had been done *to* them. They kept insisting nothing had been done to them, that their own wisdom and common sense had worked *through* them and changed their outlook as soon as they had realized how thought worked and where health and well-being originate.

But when I got up one morning and drove to work and truly saw, for the first time in years, the vivid flowers and lush tropical vegetation in all my neighbors' yards, and appreciated the tufts of clouds lingering on the horizon, and felt really connected to how beautiful life is, something happened. When I picked up the phone that same morning and an angry client began haranguing me about a wrong done to him, yelling at me to get right to his office, and I realized that he was too upset to be making sense and needed to calm down so we could understand the problem clearly, I made a different choice. I didn't rush over; I reassured him and poured out warm feelings and confidence that we would solve the problem later in the day. And later in the day, in a different state of mind, he recognized that the so-called wrong was actually a misunderstanding that he took care of himself. It saved us both hours of unpleasantness leading to nothing but a need to apologize for missing the point because we were so agitated.

My world changed, and I have never looked back. I take for granted, now, that long-time criminals can become productive, contented, tax-paying citizens because I have met such people. I take for granted that people who have suffered mental anguish for years can completely put it behind them and enjoy their lives in peace because I have met such people. I take for granted that “stress cases” can calm down and find new levels of productivity and satisfaction because I have met such people. I take for granted that people who have abused themselves and others in a search for escape from inner turmoil can put their minds to rest and be happy because I have met such people. I take for granted that people who linked motivation to success and recognition to happiness and things to security can appreciate a beautiful, quiet life and feel completely fulfilled because I am such a person.

Documentation, to me, is seeing things for oneself. Once you’ve seen something, there’s no denying it. The questions become: How do we benefit from it? How do we share it? How do we turn visible results into proof?

We look forward to joining with many colleagues in and out of academic circles to answer those questions. Meanwhile, we invite people to appreciate the enjoyment of documentation.

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