

A 'NEED TO BE RIGHT' CAN RESULT IN A GREAT COST

Have you ever thought to yourself, "why is it so important to be right?" or "has my "need" to have been right been a hindrance to my relationships?" If so, I assume you've concluded, as I have, that the need to be right can and will have a devastating impact on most of our relationships. Each time we feel the "need" to be right, we are giving into a cycle of thought that will cause a multitude of problems in our closets relationships, even between family members.

How do we learn to deal with this "need" to be right?

To be honest, I believe that everyone, if not most, of us have at times felt a need to be right to some degree. When you think about it, this need to be right might often present challenges in our relationships and cause dysfunction in our life. Again, I do believe practically speaking, that every person at certain points in life feels the need to be right, I can't imagine a person who doesn't. Seems to me that without some need to be right that a person wouldn't likely accomplish a lot in life.

With that being said, the real question we should ask ourselves, "is our need to be right a dysfunctional need to be right?"

A dysfunctional need to be right has so much control over the person that they will jeopardize relationships just to continue the argument that they are right. We have all known someone like this and likely more than one. This doesn't at all mean that they aren't good people. I'm willing to bet that whoever may have a dysfunctional need to be right, is still a really good person. I'm sure that we can all agree, that we all know really good people who still have this dysfunctional "need" to be right, that is out of control in their lives. I will go out on a limb and suggest that in many if not all situations, that a person with this dysfunctional "need", has real difficulty thinking good of themselves if they're proven wrong about something. You might say, NAH!!! But, wait a minute, one statement that I often make is that "all dysfunctional needs have no good in them." For the most part, every dysfunctional need rarely has a valid explanation, other than the dysfunction that is at work.

Think on that for a second.

Remember this whenever you communicate with someone that most likely has a dysfunctional need. Dysfunction can't ever be understood by using logical thinking. We hear quite often, "I just can't understand why they would do that or

say that". You are often right, you can't, because you are trying to understand dysfunction by using rational thinking. How much sense does that make?

Next, let me point out how so many problems are created during conversation that should not ever need to be created. One primary way is when we say to someone "you told me thus and thus". Most people make this statement when the conversation is intense and beginning to escalate. Why does this happen? For the most part, the words "you told me" have a tendency to build a wall within verbal communication and begin to create tension in the conversation. Usually, when the statement "you told me such and such" is made; the response is, "no, that is not what I said". Usually a person that has a dysfunctional need to be right has initiated these types of conversations and arguments. A person who has a dysfunctional need to be right often deviates from the norms of social behavior. Now, the person who has been accused of saying something they are confident they didn't say, might also have the dysfunctional need to be right and might possibly respond by saying "that isn't what I said" rather than saying "that isn't what I recall saying", which as you can see, softens the conversation and takes it from the argument over who is correct in what was said. When you really think about, it is so darn easy to avoid these type of situations that cause "walls" to be built in normal conversation.

For example, the other day I said to a person that said to me that I had said such and such to him in a previous conversation. I was convinced that I had not. How do I respond? Not by saying "that isn't what I said to you". My response should be "that's not what I recall saying, my recall is that I said such and such". If I am talking to a person that doesn't have this "need to always be right" the conversation will most usually move on from there and not become about who is right as to what was said. But remember this, depending on how important the relationship is to you, a weak person is usually not willing let the conversation end, unless they are right. Most of the time a person with dysfunctional need will want to control a conversation; but a mature and socially responsible person will usually end the conversation with a statement like "we just see it differently". To be honest, if the conversation was really all that important, it probably should have been put in writing to begin with. Right?

Again, the most important thing to remember in any conversation or verbal communication that takes place, is that the "need to be right" isn't worth damaging a relationship. We should always make it our primary effort to preserve the relationships that have great meaning to us. If it comes to the place to where we as people have a "need" to always be "right" in every conversation, then we have a real

problem. So many marriages can end badly because of ones need to fulfill their dysfunction need. Most marriages can prevent this type of dysfunction as long as the couple can stay focused on the fact that the marriage is more important than who is right. Because we all know that a large part of marriages can be ruined by what I call "silly" stuff. Stuff like "you told me you would call me or you would pick me up or you would do this or that and the healthier partner does not believe that to be true but in seeing the marriage more important than whether this is correct or not will respond by saying something to the effect that "I'm sorry I just didn't recall telling you that, not that I didn't".

Question, who among us has a perfect memory? Who would at times swear that they remembered something differently than what happened to later prove to be otherwise? ALL OF US, without exception.

In trial work and specifically in dealing with juries, I have taught for years that as a trial lawyer that knows what they are doing, you just don't ever let a wall build between you and the jurors. If you do, regardless, you most likely will lose your case. This is the same with relationships. The person that always has to be "right" typically finds themselves having more and more time alone. Some of you have read my article on the use of "absolutes" and how that can create relationship problems. Same when dealing with a jury.

Keep in mind, that to the extent the relationship is of importance to us is to the extent we should be more careful in how we communicate. We have often said that it is the ones closest to us that can hurt us the most. That is true. The reason is because what they say carries more weight in our lives. If you haven't read my article titled "Stock in My Corporation", you should do so then you will understand the concept as to why I say what I just said.

Also keep in mind that when communicating with someone we enjoy a relationship with, it is best to learn to use terminology that keeps the conversation moving smoothly along and not getting hung up on who is right or who is wrong. For example, someone might say "I thought I understood you to say such and such." Now some of you will say right off "well that is lying if you know they said such and such". Really? The first question I would ask those who make this proposition is "have you ever been wrong when you thought you were so right"? If your answer is "no", then you are hopeless unless you come to a place of wanting help. If your answer is "yes", how is it you know this isn't one of those times, unless it is recorded. I say this with a great deal of understanding as to how often over the

years one of my own clients would swear up and down that they didn't say such and such in a deposition and sure enough there it is right there on the page in black and white. Folks I hate to burst your bubble, but OUR MEMORIES JUST AREN'T FLAWLESS. That being the case, and for those who are willing to agree that they do have a normal memory, one that isn't flawless, and can say, regardless as to how much you believe otherwise, "I thought I understood you to say thus and thus", are not being untruthful at all. Again, for those who think they have a flawless memory, there is no hope for them until they decide to get healthy enough to be able to accept the fact that they can be and at times are WRONG. But, the issue of "getting healthy", is a whole other topic. But I will say, it all starts with one acknowledging that they have some unhealthy needs and want to have "healing" in those areas. To this I will add, I haven't ever known anyone and I have been around for quite some time, that doesn't have at least one unhealthy need. A few months ago I spoke to a room of Presidents of their Corporations and I started out by asking the question, "who in the room can raise their hand saying that they like everything about themselves?" Not one hand out of approximately some 30 men raised their hands and I certainly didn't have mine raised. Then we went on to discuss, a very lively discussion I might add, how do we deal with this "thing" that we don't like in ourselves? Do we try to keep it hidden or do we become healthy enough that we can acknowledge it and say how much we hate it? The truth is that all those close to us know it anyway. But, once we acknowledge it we no longer will be in bondage to that "it". We gain a great deal of freedom. But, moving on as this is not the subject of this article.

Just now, a staff member walked into my office to discuss a case and said that I had received such and such material from the client in my first meeting with her. I totally do not believe that I did. But my response was, rather than saying "no, I didn't", which honestly is my recall of the facts, I said "that could be true, but that is not how I recall it". Guess what. She immediately said "I could be wrong, but that is what I thought your notes said". WOW. Much different than it could have been had I approached differently. Folks, it DOES NOT HAVE TO BECOME BOGGED DOWN IN WHO IS RIGHT!!!!!! The point always needs to be "what is right" and recognizing that this doesn't necessarily always have to be resolved without more information, such as the example I just gave. i.e.: Let's wait and together look at my "note" and see if I received the material in my initial interview with the client.

I could go on for quite a while with examples of how to "soften" your verbal approach when communicating. I could also talk more about how we as people should prevent our conversations from becoming a battlefield as to "who" is right

or “who” is wrong. This entire article actually can be summed up in a few simple words from a song by Dave Mason that say; “cause we can’t see eye to eye there ain’t no good guy, there ain’t no bad guy there’s only you and me and we just disagree”. See, in the words of the song it isn’t that one or the other is bad, or good, it’s about whether or not our recall that is often flawed is accurate or if we can’t at least recognize that it could be flawed as to the situation.

Let me add this before closing this article out. How often have you been reminded about the specifics of a situation in our life that happened 2 years ago? This can and often does happen between spouses, does it not? For those of you married, I think you know what I am talking about.

BOTTOM LINE: For there to be any degree of absolute certainty as to this kind of thing, one of two things must be the case. Number one, it is in writing and/or number 2 it has been discussed from time to time and established as the case. But just to be told out of the blue that you said such and such 2 years ago and someone think they couldn’t be wrong about and isn’t willing to acknowledge they could be wrong, you likely are facing a very difficult future with someone, unless they change, places being “right” over the relationship. Think about it. Where is the love and grace in a person that can’t admit that they could be wrong, regardless of how much they may believe they aren’t? If for no other reason, but to bring peace in the situation. Ah, but if that isn’t the case then one most probably is dealing with a person that has a “dysfunctional need” to always be right. If that is the case and they can’t come to accept the fact that they aren’t always right and they decide that the relationship is more important to them than their “need to be right”, well, you obviously know the rest of the story. But, be careful to make certain that you aren’t that person before pointing your finger at someone else.

Are there times where you need to stand your ground? I am certain that there are times where you need to stand your ground, but I would say that it isn’t nearly as often as most might think. Whenever you’re at a point where you feel like you need to stand your ground, be sure that you remember that it is more important to protect and preserve the relationship, rather than trying to make sure that you are right. But, only you will know when that time might be. Remember, It’s your relationship and no one else can determine the importance of that.

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