

Lesson 23

Presenting Issues vs. Core Issues

All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware.

— Martin Buber

As you work with individual clients over time, you will see patterns or themes in the issues they present. It will become clear to you that while the situations your client tells you about appear to be different, they are more alike than unrelated. Your client has a core issue she is addressing, an underlying lesson she is in the process of learning. You can identify core issues over a series of coaching sessions with the same client, or as you become more experienced you may be able to map the terrain in an initial session.

For example, in January your client is dealing with a dispute with the landlord; in February a grievance with the boss; and in March a fight with her ex- over child custody.

Behind all of these upsets is the belief:

“There are people out there who have power over me, and I cannot get what I want because they are stronger than I am.”

If you can point out this belief to the client in a supportive way, she will be able to examine it from a higher perspective. By analogy, if you are stuck in a traffic jam on the freeway, you may feel trapped and not know if it is worth it to take the next exit or just hang in there until the jam clears. If you could rise in a helicopter or receive guidance via radio from a helicopter above, you would see where the bottleneck is and make a wise decision about how to navigate your journey. In the case of the client suggested above, when you shine the light of awareness on the pattern, she can recognize that she is bringing a self-image of smallness or victimization to all of these situations, and she can reclaim the power she has attributed to external authority figures. When that

happens, the landlord, boss, and ex- become less intimidating and may even transform from shadow enemy figures to friends and positive co-creators.

At some point I often find myself saying to a client:

“This seems to be about _____, but it’s really about _____.”

For example:

“This seems to be about losing your job, but it is really about getting clear on what you want to do and finding the courage to do it.”

or

“You think this is about your father criticizing you, but it is really about you recognizing your self-worth.”

or

“This seems to be about losing weight to attract the right partner, but it is really about your willingness to let someone into your heart and life.”

If your suggestion is attuned to a good intuition, your client will have an “aha!” and recognize the deeper issue that needs to be addressed. When he faces and masters the issue at the source level of his experience, all of the problems that seemed separate and unrelated are revealed to be connected, and answers fall into place without a lot of angst or struggle.

Usually such patterns will become apparent to you in your own “aha! moment,” either during the coaching session or if you happen to be pondering your client’s issue at another time. I usually don’t try to figure it out, although sometimes I can. Most of the time it just becomes obvious that this problem is the same as the last one, in the disguise of a different costume. Different actors on the stage are playing out the same script.

Remember that your job is not to fix your client, and you are not delving into deep psychological analysis. You are simply assisting your client to become more aware of the belief system that is coloring his choices, and encouraging him to revisit those choices from a more empowered perspective. Then he can see more options and make healthier choices.

Remember, too, that your client is on a spiritual journey, a path of self-awakening. While she may want to simply resolve a particular logistical issue, her real power lies in rising in a vertical or spiritual dimension rather than just rearranging pieces on the horizontal dimension. She is moving from a two-dimensional view of her life to a three-dimensional vision.

Exercise:

1. Regarding **your own** path and life, consider several different situations that are challenging or calling to you. Then fill in the blanks:

This seems to be about

but it's really about

2. Regarding a friend, colleague, family member, or client, consider several different situations that are challenging them. Then fill in the blanks:

This seems to be about

but it's really about

Affirm:

**I recognize patterns, themes, and lessons
behind the presenting issues of my life and my clients' lives.
I gain power over these situations and help my clients progress
by rising in awareness and connecting the dots.**