



Ralph N. Sardell, Ph.D.

400 Prospect Street, Suite 1A

La Jolla, CA 92037

858-454-2828

peaks@adnc.com

Website: peaks-coaching.com

Case Study from M.I. Coaching

The following case study reflects a brief example of the analytical perspective employed with metaphorical iconicity in the coaching process. This example represents our academic and clinical effort to resolve business and personal issues in a manner which leads to life enhancing behavior and decisions.

=====

In metaphorical iconicity coaching, we always talk about a person's obligation to do their job. In the case of a woman, many of my clients find themselves to be wives and mothers, while tending to neglect the fact that they are also women. When discussing the psyche, one can understand the sense of self as comprising three spheres: career/job, relationships, and identity. It is typically a woman's identity that is lost in the process of growing up when childhood experience is represented by dysfunctional parenting.

Coping with a difficult childhood is very challenging for children, because they do not have a great deal of options for expressing their anger over being mistreated. The behavioral options for a child amount to doing what they're told to do, running away, or acting out their anger over not being respected. Resolution of these angers in childhood is also gender-based. Most little boys who are unhappy will act out their anger by misbehaving, while little girls who are unhappy will try to behave and be the perfect little child.

In particular, in addition to being the perfect little girl, young girls will also decide to take care of, not only mommy and daddy, who are abusive to her, but also her siblings. She adopts this intense need to take care of others. She will prove that she is the good mother, which allows her to accept the bad mother in her psyche. In the process of these decisions being made during childhood, the little girl will neglect her own needs, all in an effort to feel safe and belong to the family from which she feels unloved and alienated.

A case in point would be a coaching client who experienced chronic verbal and physical abuse over the course of her childhood. Having settled on her plight by pleasing her mother and father in their

demands, as well as protecting and playing with her two brothers, she spent her childhood, the first 12 years of her life, being the perfect child - asking for as little as possible, and accepting her mother and father's decision to limit her freedom and ability to explore her world and natural gifts.

The issue that showed up during our coaching session was not directly related to her behavior as a child, but really about how her behavior was manifesting in her mothering towards her children. This excessive need to take care of others in order to avoid the feeling of loneliness and alienation drove her to place too much emphasis on her interactions with her children so that they would not feel unloved as she did. As a result of too much interaction with her children, which of course was her habitual way to interact in her family, she did not realize that she was now the all-powerful mother.

From this position of power, as the all-powerful mother, she did so much to be helpful to the developing children so that they would not feel unloved or alienated that the children began to develop a sense of helplessness. Their sense of helplessness materialized in the children believing that they could not play alone but could only play with mommy.

While this dependency upon her children allowed her to feel that she was safe in the world and had the added value to her children that mommy loved them, the developmental unfolding of the child's psyche was inhibited. This inhibition materialized in excessive dependency on mommy's attention, which subsequently materialized into frequent bedwetting as one of the children attempted preschool and kindergarten challenges.

Once the coaching client was made aware of her motivation to be excessively mothering in order to make up for the perceived threats of her childhood, that did not exist in her family today, she subsequently began to back off and give the children their space. In response to the sudden permissiveness, the children experienced minor discomfort at first, which then passed within several weeks of her new behavior. Subsequently, my coaching client noticed that her children began to smile more when they looked at her, and the siblings started to get along with one other rather than competing for mommy's attention.

Metaphorical iconicity recognizes that children develop like flowers. The job of a parent is to facilitate their growth by providing the necessary resources. It is not necessary to teach or interact excessively with a flowering plant. It is necessary, however, to make sure that no one crushes that plant.

In this effort, the coaching client became more of a mother and less of a little girl. After making the adjustment, in response to her new sense of balance regarding her job and her own personal growth, her anxieties diminished dramatically..