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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.

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It should not be surprising that there are more women attending coaching sessions than men. This is because women are more open to exploring their motivations and feelings regarding their business and families when compared to men. Men inherently and biologically feel the need to be right and to believe in the rightness of their decisions. As a result, this need to feel right can often lead to shortsighted decision making.

A case in point is a man who mentioned in our coaching session that he and his fiancée were going to contact his daughter-in-law and find out why she had been distant over the preceding several months. Since the coaching client, who was a man, deemed very successful financially, and very accomplished intellectually, was the father in law, his position of power and influence over the family would seem obvious. Furthermore, his need to appear weak and needy by asking for some recognition from his daughter-in-law, was a very old behavior that he was familiar with during his previous marriage. Thus, his need to approach his daughter-in-law seemed like a very insecure behavior and unbecoming of his position as the patriarch.

When questioned about his intended motives and his anticipated outcome, he admitted that it was not he who initially conceived of the need to contact the sister-in-law but rather it was his fiancée. I pointed out that his fiancée's insecurities were a separate issue that needn't complicate his existing family issues, especially since the fiancée was going to be the new member of the family and would have to accept her position. I questioned the validity of letting this new member influence the relationship of the existing members: father, son and daughter-in-law.

Furthermore, I pointed out that if my coaching client makes the call on behalf of his fiancée, and this upsets the daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law might take out her discomfort on my coaching client's son. Since he had been working diligently to make up for the years of neglect he showed for his son, this decision to influence his relationship with his son needed to be weighed against his need to please the insecurities of his fiancée.

When these issues were pointed out to the coaching client, he immediately saw that his relationship to his son, which he was enjoying for the first time in his life, meant more to him than pleasing his fiancée's insecurities. Well aware of her insecurities, I pointed out that he was accepting her into his life with her insecurities, and that if he could not do that, then they should not be together.

Committed to his fiancée, he explained that he did not want to interfere with his son's marriage and that her need to communicate with the sister-in-law would have to wait for some future date when they were all together. Such a face-to-face discussion would prove more lasting and reflect more honesty than a telephone call or an email.

My coaching client was very pleased with himself for recognizing the value of his relationship with his child over the relationship with the fiancée. His natural tendency to always obey the female in his life was now being replaced with a natural tendency to be the leader of the family and exercise masculinity.

In metaphorical iconicity terms, his obligation was to his son rather than to his fiancée. This naturally allowed him to feel good about his decision to not reach out from a position of weakness.