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THE ART OF QUESTIONING VS TELLING

A very powerful aspect of Coaching or in assisting others is in asking powerful questions. It increases awareness, openness, understanding and, ultimately, solutions, new ideas and directions, plans and actions. You may apply this to some of your own life situations and relationships.

There is a big difference between questioning and telling. Many people want to help others around them. Often they do so by sharing their experiences and telling people what has worked for them. When sharing or telling, the message you so greatly and passionately want to share may not even have a chance to get off the ground, and you may have wasted your breath completely if you are simply telling one of your own stories. Further, if you have not asked for permission to share, you may even damage the relationship. People apply their own solutions much more readily and willingly than they apply those of others.

If you want to experiment with this, try telling somebody what you know or have experienced without being asked or without asking permission. Notice the reactions or responses you get. Then, try asking somebody for permission to share with them something that you feel may be helpful to them. One of the best things you can do for people is to ask for their permission, hear their response, and honour their desire to discuss something or not. If they do give their permission to move ahead with the conversation, watch again how they respond. Take it a step further and simply ask them open ended questions about what's happening for them, what's important to them about it, and how they can make choices about it. Again, note their responses.

What differences did you notice? Under which situations did they go silent, cross their arms, look away, become disengaged, become defensive? Under which situations did they participate, actively listen, ask more, share, interact, be more light, become enthused, find their own answers?

When you go to share a story or experience with somebody you are trying to support, check your intention. Do you want to be right, do you want to be a hero, or do you want to help the other person help themselves in a way that works? Sometimes we can help people more by helping them find their own answers rather than giving them ours. We are all different and all situations are different. What works for one does not always work for another. By asking carefully created questions, we can help people find their own answers. When these answers are their own, they become more aware, have better gut level understanding, absorb more and are in a better position to make positive choices and changes for themselves.