



Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

May 2010

Greetings!

Last month's newsletter ended with the following:

The great secret [in breaking through] is to knowingly put yourself at risk. To feel it fully. And to breathe all the while. To make friends with that feeling. After all ... it's only a feeling.

That idea produced a great response, both from those who thought it a bit foolhardy, as well as those willing to embrace it. To those with the first perspective, I completely understand and encourage you to do it despite your reluctance. To those with the latter perspective, go right ahead.

Why, you might ask? Let me reply with the story of a coaching client.

Shannon is a strong, younger woman who has arrived into positions of authority despite her youth. Often those around her tend to discount her, or so she believes, because she is much younger. But Shannon is nothing if not tenacious. Her perception and intuition are extremely good, and as a result she is generally quite clear when something needs to be voiced. Each time the need to speak arises, she encounters her own inner resistance. She really dislikes having to say what no one wants to hear, but somehow she always musters the wherewithal to speak the truth.

Not surprisingly, Shannon sometimes pays a price for her courage and candor. Still she persists in truth telling. She embraces the challenge because her willingness is somehow always slightly greater than her fear. In observing Shannon's behavior, I would say she has not overcome the fear of exposure, rather that she has made peace with the feeling. Therefore her desire to act is just enough greater than her aversion to risk that she is able to act. In effect, she has not increased her courage, but has become more comfortable with her feelings of exposure. As a result she continues to grow significantly in personal and professional effectiveness.

Watching Shannon reminds me of cliff diving as a boy in Oklahoma. Near Crowder Point on Lake Eufala there are bluffs over the reservoir that rise thirty to sixty feet. Other than the perceived risk, it's really quite safe. That doesn't mean

there might not be injury if one hit the water wrong, but that's true of most all of life. Really what I remember dealing with every single time was fear.

Now there are those who will argue for fear as a useful tool. I can't disagree. But I can say that over and over again I have seen any number of fears prove to be unfounded. As I once heard someone say, "When I reviewed all the fears I could remember from my past, very few if any ever proved to be true."

What does that tell us? First, that we are wired on the inside to avoid apparent risk. Second, that most risk is only appearance. Third, that the only way we learn the difference is through experience. Last, and I would offer this as my experience-based suggestion, that we **MUST** learn the difference by confronting the fear.

Now I segue to one of my favorite quotes, by Mary Chapin Carpenter.

"Where do all the shadows go when there is only light?"

Ponder that for a moment ...

What happens to apparent risk when we step into it and find it is nothing but appearance?

Try it. Let me know what you discover.

Ron

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