

## **Intrinsic Validation – the art of connection**

To assist us in mastering the art of connecting with people, we have identified and divided the process into seven steps. We call these steps the Seven Principles of Intrinsic Validation.

I remember the first time I shared these principles with Scott Irwin, CEO of Apex Pipe Company in Houston, Texas. At the conclusion of our coaching session, and I have permission to share this, Scott asked, “How many people know about Intrinsic Validation?” “A few,” I responded. With a furtive yet humorous tone Scott asked, “Could we keep this to ourselves?”

A few years later and now serving as a member of our Board of Directors, Scott accepted an invitation to speak at the Og Mandino Coaching Group Annual Conference. He started his speech with, “As I was leaving my office yesterday afternoon I could hear our sales team I.V.ing (his term for Intrinsic Validation) our customers and I knew everything would be okay while I was away.”

He concluded his inspiring remarks that day by sharing a story about how he had successfully applied these principles to resolve a very troubling and potentially damaging situation that had occurred a few weeks earlier.

Scott shared that Apex was in partnership with a man who owned a very large oil pipeline. Recently and unannounced, this partner crashed into Scott’s corporate headquarters, accountant in tow, making

wild and railing accusations about the misappropriation of partnership funds.

Scott continued, “I sure was glad that I had listened to Og’s Scroll II that morning and was actively focused on applying the principles of Intrinsic Validation. Every penny was accounted for. We knew that. Moreover, we had been a very good partner on many other levels of responsibility. But this moment in time took every ounce of conscious awareness I could muster.”

Instead of becoming defensive, Scott shared how he stepped into the world of this very angry person, took down his walls of resistance, quieted the storm by calmly answering each question and addressing each concern. In the end and with the problems defused, they left for dinner like “good ‘ole buds at Christmas.”

Scott ended his remarks that day to our coaches with this testimonial, “We have both made and saved millions of dollars applying the principles of Intrinsic Validation. This deal alone was worth several million dollars to us. We I.V. everyone - and we sell pipe for heaven sake! This would be a very different world if everyone knew how to do this and cared enough to actually do it! Do your jobs well. Teach this to the world. Trust me, the world really needs it.”

Before we commence the journey of learning these Seven principles, please understand that Intrinsic Validation is not about

creating rapport or being warm and fuzzy. It is about creating real connection.

**Principle #1: Look for the good in people or what is important to them.**

This is the first principle of Intrinsic Validation. Notice people. Notice their uniqueness and pricelessness. Notice what they do. Notice what is important to them. To master this principle, we'll want to approach another person filled with agape love, an open mind and free from judgment. At this stage, nothing need be said aloud.

In 1968 Og offered this prophetic wisdom in Scroll II. He writes, "And how will I confront each with whom I meet? In only one way: in silence and to myself, I will address him and say, 'I love you.' Though spoken in silence, these words will shine in my eyes, unwrinkle my brow, bring a smile to my lips, and echo in my voice. And his heart will be open. And who is there who will say nay to my goods, when his heart feels my love?" How important is this?

When Og wrote these words neuroscience was embryonic. It would be decades before neuroscientists discovered mirror neurons. These little neurons reside primarily in our amygdala, the fight and flight center of the brain. These neurons act as a highly developed radar system.

As we scan the environment and interact with people, our mirror neurons collect information, including mounds of data often missed by our optic center. When activated, mirror neurons respond at twice the speed of a normal neuron sending signals to the body long before conscious thought occurs. Yes, people may feel what these neurons have discovered long before they may consciously know why they are feeling a certain way.

Mirror neurons are basically BS detectors, highly sensitive antennae picking up our every hidden thought. Our face has 200 muscles that make possible millions and millions of different facial expressions (try  $2^{200-1}$ ). If we are thinking judgmental thoughts while consciously trying to act like we care, it is nearly impossible to hide the judgment from a person's mirror neurons. Our negative thoughts will leak out on our face and a person's mirror neurons will pick up the subtlety.

I vividly remember the first time I studied Og's scrolls. I got to Scroll II and read the previously referenced paragraph about saying silently and to myself, "I love you." I remember scoffing. "I'm a guy's guy. I am not about to go around shaking hands and saying to people, 'I love you,' whether in silence and to myself, or not." The idea seemed ridiculous.

About twenty days into the 30-day process with Scroll II, I finally surrendered and decided to put it to the test. What a revelation! I immediately discovered what I had been doing for a lifetime. What do you think it was? Yes, I'd been judging everyone I met. Everyone! Ouch!

When we judge, a person's mirror neurons pick it up. They just do. The person may feel uncomfortable. Something is not right. This does not facilitate connection.

When we focus on finding the good or what is important to another person and silently express our agape love, we are on the road to connection. We are becoming congruent with the laws that govern abundance. We can even put a person at ease – it's neuroscience but it will seem like magic.

**Principle #2: When you find the good in a person or what is important to them, verbalize it.**

We see so much more than we verbalize.

A few years ago, I was coaching with a young woman, a professional salesperson with a nice six-figure income. I asked her to invest a week playing red flags, green flags – what's wrong versus what's good in people. I asked her to focus on green flags for an entire week. She agreed to take on the challenge.

When she called the next week, I initiated the conversation by asking, "How was the game?" She said, "I am really p---- off." "Tell me more about that," I inquired. She went on to tell me that it was fun for the first couple of days. It was like a game. She said, "I was looking for green flags in everyone and I was verbalizing what I saw."

“What happened after two days?” I asked. She responded “Ugh! There’s just so much red!!!!”

After a brief pause she started laughing and shared, “Dave, what I learned is I spend most of my time judging, looking for what’s wrong and I justify it - I need to be careful, I need to be certain that they’re a real prospect, etc., etc.” She continued while reflecting, “Yeah, and all that time, I’m missing opportunities to take down their walls of resistance so that I can create a safe place for connection.”

Practice this for a week and see if you initially discover as did most of us that, “Ooh, there’s just so much red!” If this is your discovery, keep actively looking for the good. By doing so you are saying, “I notice you. I am noticing what’s good about you. I’m noticing what’s important to you and I’m willing to share it with you. You matter.”

Recently, I was a guest at a luncheon following a speech. Our waiter, a young man in his early 20’s, was sporting a pencil-thin beard and mustache. Most of the guys at the table wouldn’t want to or couldn’t grow this kind of facial hair, but this was not about us. Focusing on what was important to him, it became readily apparent that he must invest a lot of time each morning maintaining this masterpiece. Were we willing to see how important this beard was to him, even if it wasn’t important to us? If we can be conscious in these pivotal moments, we will notice. When we verbalize our discoveries amazing experiences will be ours.

We asked the waiter for his name. He responded, “George.” We said to this young waiter, “George, you have to tell us about your beard! It must take a long time to trim it. And if you miss, you wipe out half of it!” There was an immediate shift in George’s energy. His shoulders relaxed. He smiled. He stepped into the conversation. Someone had noticed him. We all enjoyed a friendly laugh as George went around the table in an attempt to determine who could and who couldn’t grow that kind of a beard and mustache. George took our orders and the miracle unfolded. As a natural consequence of noticing George, George noticed us.

We were not acting. We were not being fake or phony. We were not being manipulative. We were being aware. We wanted to know George’s name. We cared enough to notice what was important to him. He mattered. Walls came down and cooperation and productivity flooded out.

While conducting a couple’s retreat at our Bear Lake cabin, Ramona and I asked one of the more shy and reserved male participants to tell us more about his tattoos. His face lit up. In the next thirty minutes he shared more than he did during the previous three days.

He explained that as a child he wanted two things, one, to join the Marines and two, to get a tattoo. Shortly after becoming a Marine, he got news that his unit was being shipped off to Iraq. He went to a tattoo

parlor and had the artist inscribe three Christian crosses on each of his forearms, and his chest and back.

Pointing to and then methodically touching each of the three crosses on his right forearm he shared, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Looking up, he continued, “I wanted to keep God where I could see him and I wanted him to protect my heart and guard my back.”

He was a mortar man and would be fighting on the front line and usually in the most challenging skirmishes. He told us about the bloodiest, the battle in Fallujah where “the smell of death was in every breath.” His audience was spellbound. He shared that he made it home in one piece, but nine months later his unit was again called up. Before deployment he went back to the tattoo parlor. In a trembling voice that pricked the hearts of everyone listening and while touching the heavy drop shadows on the crosses he shared, “I had them reinforced. I had been there once before. I knew what I was about to face. I needed to make sure God would be with me.”

I know I will never again look at a tattoo the same way. Any bias, prejudice or judgment melted, understanding prevailed, connections were made, friendships were strengthened - all because we noticed what was important to this brave young veteran. His walls came down and we all received a rich outpouring of inspiration.



Let us not miss any more opportunities to look for the good and to see what is important to others. Let us notice others. Let us make them matter. And when we see it, let us freely verbalize it.

After a little practice it will be time to go to the next principle and the graduate level of connection – the transition from “I notice you” to “I am starting to feel what you are feeling.”

### **Principle #3: Listen for doors and step into a person's world.**

Doors are clues, verbal hints about what someone is truly thinking or experiencing behind their wall of resistance. No matter how simple, complex, caustic, hurtful or even rhetorical, a door is simply an invitation into another person's world.

Doors can be simple statements such as, “I'm so tired.” “Honey, let's get away.” “I hate my English teacher.” “It costs too much.” “Let's take a walk.”

Some of the biggest and most important doors are caustic and at first appear to be hurtful. “That's a stupid idea.” “Don't waste productive time reading that book or listening to that CD program! You should be working!” “You never listen to me!” “I can't take this anymore!” “That IS NOT what you said!”

Doors can also be rhetorical statements, questions that don't really require an answer, such as, "Can't you hear me?" "How could you be involved in something like that?!" "Why would you ever agree to do that?" "How could you do that to me?" "How many times are you going to bug me about that?" "Doesn't anyone care what happens to me?"

Og provides another clue in Scroll II to assist us in handling these difficult doors. He says, "I will greet this day with love in my heart (agape love, this heightened level of awareness). But how will I react to the actions of others? With love. For just as love is my weapon to open the hearts of men, love is also my shield to repulse the arrows of hate and the spears of anger. Adversity and discouragement will beat against my new shield and become as the softest of rains."

Is there anyone in your personal or professional life that knows how to throw arrows or even spears with great accuracy? What happens when they pierce your heart? Ever pulled one of those arrows or spears out of your heart, tipped it with a little more poison and sent it back with deadly accuracy? Ever do it with the postscript, "And that's the end of it." How did the person react? Did they "take it like a man" or tip it with even more venom and hurl it back?

When someone hurts or offends us it is natural to make it about us and lash back. When we do, we will defend our position, justify our actions, and counter punch by pointing out faults and flaws in our attacker. We get to be right but we do not get to be rich. It is natural to make everything about us but intrinsic validation is not about being

natural. When we are focused on others and listening for doors so that we can step into a person's world we cannot be offended. It is not about us.

Once we hear a door – a verbal hint about what a person is thinking or experiencing – we are at choice. Do we consciously choose to step through the door and into this person's world or not? When we choose to walk through a door, we acknowledge the door by saying something like, "Tell me more about that," or "Share with me what you are thinking," and the simplest of all, "I'm listening." Whatever we choose to say it should convey the following message, "I am truly interested in what you are thinking. I am not here to judge or fix – just to listen and gain understanding. I want to know what you are thinking and experiencing."

At this pivotal moment in the connection process, we will want to make the commitment to leave our agenda and baggage at the door. Our agenda is everything we are excited and motivated and, at times, impatient to present. Our baggage is the collection of unbalanced advice from these and other thought processes. This would include the need to be right, to give advice, to give feedback, to fix, to convince, to impress, to pretend, feel ashamed or fear and tell our story (this comes later). All of this is baggage.

Envision yourself standing at the wall of resistance carefully listening for a door. You are holding two suitcases. One contains your agenda. The second contains your personal baggage. A door opens and

you consciously choose to walk in. Just before you cross the threshold, you place one suitcase to the right of the door and the second to the left. You walk in free and unencumbered.

It is time to practice listening for doors and stepping into a person's world. If you have chosen a profession laden with opportunity, success may require that you enroll others in your vision. Whether or not this is your chosen career, receiving a caustic opening comment in any conversation can prove to be trying.

Let's explore a common caustic comment. The outcome may seem ideal, however, when we listen for doors and step into a person's world, we will discover that there are usually good reasons for caustic comments. Frequently these comments are due to a person's past or current experiences and are not meant to hurt us. If directed at us, we may want to explore and be accountable for anything we have done to contribute. How many doors can you identify in the following conversations?

"John, John, John. What are you doing? Everyone knows that this is a scam. How could you ever get involved in something like this?"

What do we want to say in response? Do we want to defend this "personal attack" or are we willing so see this comment as a GIANT door? Be calm. Don't make this about you. If you can do that, you cannot be offended. This is about hearing doors and stepping into a person's world.

“Share with me what you are thinking.”

“I got in one of those things ten years ago. Bought a garage full of inventory, worked my butt off for three years, and recruited my favorite aunt and uncle. The company went bankrupt, my aunt and uncle lost their home...”

What are we tempted to say? Is it something about your company being different or about the financial security of the founders? Let’s not make this about our ideas, solutions, products or us. Hear any doors? Here are some clues: inventory, hard work, bankruptcy, favorite aunt and uncle lost their home. Ever experienced any of this? If so, consider an empathetic question – one born out of your life experience.

“When you first got in the business and worked so hard, was there ever a time when you were so excited you could hardly sleep?”

How would you know to ask that question? Have you been there? If so, how did you feel when you first got started in your business? If you own your experience, you can access it. Here are a few more questions based on the doors provided.

“Was your aunt and uncle on your side of the family or your wife’s?”

“What impact has the loss of their home had on your family functions over the past several years?”

“How long did it take to recover emotionally from the loss of all that time, energy and money you invested?”

“When you were working so hard and investing so much time and money, what was the largest amount of money you even dared to dream of making on a monthly basis?”

Defensive and even hateful conversations can be avoided or mitigated when we focus on others. We also discover things about people that can help temper our instinct to react with frustration and awaken our compassion.

For example we have a business partner that is angry and threatening to leave and make waves in the exit. We may know that there are other circumstances occurring in their life that are contributing to their anger. The question is, do they know that we know? Do they know that we care what is happening? Are they lashing out at us or just lashing out?

In the absence of intrinsic validation we may be sending a message that is not edifying or validating and if we are not careful we can quickly become another very real object of their anger.

Whether our thought processes intuitively support listening for doors or if this is a new experience, when we consciously choose to listen, we will find doors everywhere. Here is an interesting and

revealing husband and wife conversation. How many doors can you identify?

Husband walks in after a long day at work.

“What’s for dinner? I’m starving! Skipped lunch.”

Wife is pensive and sitting on the couch.

“How about we go out? It’s been an awful day!”

Husband sits in the adjacent chair, picks up the remote and turns on the TV.

“I’ll just throw something together. The playoffs start in 20 minutes.”

Wife leans forward.

“Tom said I could get off for two weeks in June. Wouldn’t it be nice to go to Tahiti and stay in one of those romantic straw huts over the water, the ones with the glass floors? It’s been a long time since we did something like that.”

Husband quickly glances over while selecting the correct channel.

“So long as there’s a place to lock up my golf clubs. Speaking of golf, did you hear the new course is opening Saturday?”

Pulling an invitation out of his pocket.

“Invitation only.”

Wife rings her hands, leans into the conversation even more and continues.

“Did you hear Marilyn and Harry are getting a divorce?”

Husband smiles at a humorous commercial while responding.

“Sure glad our marriage is strong.”

Wife scoots over to the other side of the coach and closer to her husband.

“I heard that Harry has a new girlfriend.”

Husband responds while angrily trying to get the remote to respond.

“Boys will be boys.”

Wife stands and exits the room.



“Where are you going? What did I say?”

Shaking his head.

“Ahhh, women!”

Hear any doors? Ladies, help us guys. If we were to step into this woman’s world and clearly hear the doors that are telescoping her underlying thoughts, what might we discover? What has she been thinking about? What has been weighing on her mind? What is troubling her? What verbal hints, what doors did she give us? Did her husband hear any of the doors or was he pre-occupied with his own agenda?

Gentlemen, there are great lessons to learn from these doors - It’s been an awful day; Can we get away to a romantic location for a couple of weeks; Marilyn and Harry are getting a divorce; Harry already has a new girlfriend.

What is she thinking? What is going on in her world? Did her husband care enough to notice? Do those we profess to love really matter to us, especially when we don’t believe we have time to listen? What price do we pay when we fail to listen and connect?

What might happen if when this husband came into the room and his wife commented, “I had an awful day,” he simply sat down next to

her, put his arm around her and invited her to share by saying, “Tell me more about your day.”

I remember one early Saturday morning while sharing this simple idea for the first time to a new group of coaching clients, a woman came off mute and sardonically proclaimed, “Men don’t do that!” Is this true?

Are guys, in general, a little bit more self-absorbed? Perhaps, but what would be different in our relationships if we consciously listened for doors and then stepped into the world of those we profess to love? What do you think ladies?

Now in all fairness, did the husband share any doors? Ladies there are great lessons to be learned from these doors - skipped lunch; want to watch the playoffs; a new golf course is opening. Okay, don’t laugh. These things are important to guys. The real point is this. We can all get stuck believing that our agenda is the most important. After all it is consuming our thoughts. It may in fact be, but if we want to take down the walls of resistance and be the beneficiaries of that huge reservoir of cooperation and productivity, we may have to momentarily set aside our agenda and consciously listen for someone else’s doors.

It is possible that some people may have thought processes that are so guarded that it may be difficult to get them to open up. When this occurs, it may be necessary to gently knock on their wall in search of a door. Ask sincere and simple questions such as, “How should we handle this? What do you think would be best? What is your greatest challenge

or concern? Are you okay? How would you like to do this? What ideas are brewing in that fertile mind of yours (with a smile, of course)?”

These are not rapid-fire questions. The idea is to ask one of these questions and then be silent. Give the person time to digest, process and feel safe. Just know that the single greatest reason for a person being shut down is self-protection. How long would we continue to openly share our thoughts if every time we did, someone needed to fix us and needed to be right about it?

Be the patient one. When someone has been hammered on, they have most likely reinforced their walls of resistance. It may take a few moments or even another time or two to encourage them to open the locks to their barricaded doors. We may want to take a personal inventory to make sure we are the cure and not the cause.

A client once reported that his skeptical wife, due to their rocky relationship, responded to his initial and awkward attempts to step into her world by saying, “Don’t give me any of the Dave Blanchard crap.” Now that’s a solid core door! Good news. Consistent and sincere attempts eventually won the day and much needed healing was facilitated.

Og speaks to this in Scroll II, “My reasoning they may counter; my speech they may distrust; my apparel they may disapprove; my face they may reject; and even my bargains may cause them suspicion; yet my love (agape love – heightened level of awareness) will melt all hearts liken to the sun whose rays soften the coldest clay.”

Invest a week listening for doors and stepping into people's worlds. Start with those closest to you. Focus and listen carefully. Be patient. As you begin to master this principle, you'll begin to hear doors everywhere. As you hear more and more doors, you'll also become acutely aware how seldom people actually listen. Until now, you may have been one of them.