Quality #4: Discipline and Structure

Finding Good in Other People's Ideas:

You are having a discussion with a spouse, companion, business partner, coworker, or direct report (select one). This person is sharing how they are going to approach an important decision or task. If handled incorrectly the result could negatively impact your finances/budget, reputation, standing in the community, promotion, etc. Your thought processes think their approach is wrong and you can easily see all the flaws in their ideas. Add to this the seriousness of the occasion.

What might your thoughts suggest or insist that you say or do? Have you ever tried to correct, fix, or convince a person in a situation like this? If yes, what was the result? Do you ever get angry when others don't agree with your ideas? Have you ever wondered how someone could be so wrong and still fight so vehemently for what was obviously a bad idea? Do you ever feel hurt when others won't listen to your ideas?

What can we do when faced with such dilemmas? It is time to discover how to take down walls of resistance in moments like these so that an honest and productive discussion can occur.

When we need to be right, we crush people and destroy relationships. People are clearly more valuable than any task or assignment, yet these things are important too and need to get done and in a timely manner. We want people to be invested in our vision. We

want them to feel ownership and be engaged. Here's an idea for accomplishing this feat.

We know that ninety-five percent (95%) of the population cannot separate their ideas from their self-worth. When self-worth is directly tied to ideas, finding good in a person's idea is tantamount to finding good in that person. Finding good in an idea is an advanced form of Intrinsic Validation – stepping into someone's world. Once validated, walls come down and we become the beneficiary of a person's huge reserve of cooperation and productivity.

We have two choices: We can either choose to be right, control and crush or we can choose to be rich! Next time you have an idea that you feel strongly about and someone has an opposing idea, especially if you can see all of the flaws in their idea, consider trying the following:

1.   Step back and consciously separate yourself from these sabotaging thoughts.
2.   See the person involved as a living breathing human being versus someone to execute a task.
3.   Look for the good in the person's idea, even if you have to dig a little.

Your unbalanced thoughts might be screaming, "Don't do it, they will think you agree with them and you won't get your own way!" It's okay. Let them scream.

Finding good in someone's idea can be like trying to find a ripe avocado in an avocado tree. You walk under the tree and then search and search and search. Finally one appears. Almost instantly you see hundreds of them. It just takes focus and concentration and a determination. So it is with finding good in someone' idea. Once we let go of resistance we are often surprised how much good there is in another person's idea. It can be hard to look. It can also be hard to accept the possibility that there is good. But when we find it, we rise to another plateau in our ability to connect with others. The real miracle comes when we discover how freeing it is to let go of the need to be right.

4.   Tell them, "What I like best about your idea is…" and then share specifics.

This comment can release tension in a room, validate another person's ideas, create a safe place for the sharing of ideas, bring down walls of resistance and create compromise to solve difficult challenges. We are first and foremost connecting with people. If they were robots the whole discussion would be different, but they are not. And in truth, we would not want them to be, except when we are bull-headed and want to get our way. Be very careful, some can become addicted to conflict. In the end, these people are left alone and lonely.

This exercise can be adopted for group settings, ideally team meetings, management meetings, family meetings, etc. Here is how it works:

1.   Select one agenda item for your next meeting. Consider selecting an item for which you hold a strong opinion about what should be done or how it should be done.

2.   Ask each member of the group, one at a time, to share his or her ideas about the best way to address or solve this challenge.

3.   After each member shares, ask the other members of your group to respond, one at a time, by saying, "What I liked best about your idea is…" and then sharing. You should always go last.

4.   Record the responses. After all members of the group have shared and everyone has responded, including you, step back with them and create a workable plan for addressing or resolving the agenda item. Examine:

What good ideas came out of this process that may not have surfaced otherwise? How much more ownership, cooperation and productivity might you receive if you did this more frequently? How close did the final solution come to your original idea?

Yes, it does take a few more minutes to conduct a meeting using this format, however you should expect two things:

1.   Your team will most likely respond that this was the best meeting they have ever attended.

2.   You will most likely spend considerably less time pushing a rope (managing their efforts) because they have ownership in the plan.

This just might be worth the time. Guaranteed it will be more fun!