

Time for Change ... When your basic systems no longer work for you.

By Edward B. Toupin

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I've heard many clients and friends discuss how they just can't seem to move beyond their current situations in life. They can't find a better job, make more money, find happiness in relationships, or find fulfillment. The question I usually ask is, "What is your idea of the perfect, fulfilling situation?" They usually sputter a few ideas then stop and realize that they truly don't know what it is that would bring them fulfillment.

As we grow and change, we eventually run into the outer limits of our safety zone known as our "belief system." The belief system confines our existence, and consists of the knowledge and experiences that shape who we are and what we value in our lives. What was fulfilling, is now a burden. What was exciting, is now boring. At this point, we must learn how to extend, or change, our belief systems to allow us to move forward and find new meaning and new fulfillment.

--- Spheres of Belief ---

A belief system can be viewed as consisting of three distinct, yet interconnected, "spheres of belief." Each sphere represents an area of our lives that we maintain as our own secure zones. Our core values and beliefs that affect our daily lives are taken from the combination of these three spheres.

* Sphere One: The first sphere contains relationships and our interpersonal goals. It represents our interaction with others in our lives including family and friends. It provides us with a foundation of security for interpersonal interaction and growth.

* Sphere Two: The second sphere contains professional goals. This is the area of our life that supports the ability to work toward a vision with the knowledge to provide security for ourselves and our family.

* Sphere Three: The third and final sphere contains personal goals. This sphere contains our knowledge and experiences that define our personal desires, goals, and direction. This is also the area in which we store our personal identities.

The primary benefit of building and maintaining your spheres is that they provide a solid and definable arena in which you can live and work comfortably. However, the problem is that, occasionally, these spheres become too confining and eventually limit your growth. In essence, when you hit the outer wall of any sphere, you must determine the best way to increase the size of the sphere to accommodate your growth and still maintain your security.

--- Establishing Core Values ---

From birth, we constantly receive information from which we build and create a belief system and core values. The information comes from our environment, parents, people we feel are in authority, and various other inputs. In some cases, the environment is positive and in others, it is negative. Regardless, it is that with which we all learn to cope until it is familiar and comfortable.

For example, if we grow up in a loving, family environment, then we learn values that are essential to the creation and establishment of a loving environment. If we grow up in a hostile environment, then we will learn the values that are essential to maintaining a hostile environment. People always turn to that which is familiar, regardless of how wonderful or harsh, because familiarity provides security and acceptance.

--- Understanding Your System ---

In every case, you have to understand the various information and aspects of your life that shaped your belief system. When your belief system no longer provides support for your direction and desires, then you will be aware of what has shaped your beliefs to limit you.

When you do reach the outer wall of the basic belief system, you can become stressed, depressed, lost, and unable to move down your path. In this case, you begin to lose hope and simply settle into a lifestyle that is "just there" and you cannot go beyond where your system allows you to go.

You must understand your system to change your system. This is accomplished by examining the things that are important to you and determining the things that have shaped your beliefs. Some of these things, you will find, are no longer important and are simply holding you back. Other things, of new importance, appear just outside of your reach and cause you stress because you cannot reach them---unless you change your system.

--- Changing Your System ---

It is important to realize that if you always do what you've always done then you'll always receive what you've always received. To move forward and build on your current foundation, it is important to continually reinvent yourself and make changes to your basic belief system.

Reinventing yourself and changing your belief system does not mean completely eliminating the things that are important. Just as you would not quit your job without having something else available, you cannot expect to completely eliminate your current system and values and expect to succeed. It is a process of changing or eliminating the things that no longer work, using the things that are available to suit your direction, and determining how to acquire the resources necessary to reach your ultimate destination. It is a process that moves at your own pace.

--- What's next? ---

Once you're able to analyze your current system and determine where it is that you ultimately want to be, you will be able to determine the changes necessary to create a new and workable system for you. The next step is to implement your changes and become proactive in your life. You will then be on your way to a new and fulfilling life!

Good luck!

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