



MEANINGFUL LIVING
PSYCHOLOGY, LIFE COACHING & TRAINING

Meaningful Living Newsletter

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Feelings 101 – Back to Basics by Karina Stell

'Feelings' work is indeed the basics of growth and change and those who attend our sessions and Groups would be very familiar with what I'm writing and I may even elicit an eye-roll or two. The reason I'm re-visiting this is ***it is not in the knowing, but the practicing*** on a daily basis that we notice change. I catch myself often just knowing. Never enough. It's the noticing which is the key to unlock the process. Noticing, making choices commensurate with values which lead to growing; it's the only way that any of this work has value. ***However, if the 'how' of this work is misunderstood***, it can be misleading and take us places far from where we want to be authentically.

Being able to express our true feelings is something which is very important indeed. Letting others know what is going on inside us is pivotal to authentic living. Learning how to name our stuff without blaming another is extremely useful to our growth and allows for deep connection with ourselves and others.

So of course, learning ***how to connect*** with how we feel is the preeminent place. There is ***absolutely no place else to start*** and if we aren't getting this done, the rest is of no real usefulness. So let's pretend you've never heard any of this before and let's visit three of the most basic principles

that underpin all of the work we do to become more authentic and live more meaningfully.

Firstly, and pivotally, is understanding how to express a feeling. "I feel diminished", "I feel that you are dismissive/ disrespectful/uncaring etc., are **not** feelings.

These are all judgments. Judgments are never useful. This is such an important distinction. If the word 'that' or 'if' or 'when' or any other word other than an actual feeling follows the words 'I feel' then you can be fairly certain you are not expressing a feeling. So "I feel you are rude" – judgment. 'I feel sad', - feeling. This basic understanding is a very important foundation for sharing how we feel with others.

If we **don't** make this distinction, we can experience ourselves attempting to validate and connect with "non-feeling" statements that merely had the prefix "I feel"and then a judgement. This is a deep trap and leaves people in a state of confusion of saying internally "I'm not comfortable with this, I'm trying to be supportive but it feels wrong". This is because if we validate a judgement, particularly one we don't hold, in order to be supportive without connecting with a feeling, we've totally missed the point and

are now engaging in a need to defend our own needs. With statements like, "I get you, but....", rather than "wow, is that what it feels like to be you". ***Feelings connect us – judgements are an escape route from feelings. So important to know the difference.***

Secondly and equally important, is what is expected 'should' come next. The absolute truth that a feeling can be neither right nor wrong, cannot be questioned. A feeling is a feeling is a feeling. You feel angry. Ok. You feel contempt. Ok. Shame, also ok. The struggle to not feel 'bad' emotions is all underpinned by judgment. 'I don't want to feel that', 'It's wrong to feel that'. All judgments. Human beings feel. Whether we deny, bury or stifle a feeling, it is no less there than before. ***Feelings are the guides to what lies underneath – burying them denies us and the work we need to do.***

This is the greatest gift of feelings. If we are willing to accept them instead of deny them, they lead us to the places of real knowing and understanding of who we are and what we care about. They alert us to a clash between our behaviour and our values, to something not being ok within. Why would we deny ourselves this? Because it is much easier to blame. If I'm not responsible for my pain, I don't have to do any work. Every boundary and value

I have chosen, has emanated from this type of discovery and internal work and yet I see myself in all my imperfection and feel compassion for my struggles daily as I notice. When I feel, I ask myself what is going on. Sometimes it can take some time of sitting in some internal angst, but I know it's in there and it's trying to teach me something. In noticing lies the real beginning of the work. This is the gateway feelings open.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that we do not express how we feel in a vacuum. How we feel affects others. This is why it is so important to connect deeply with ourselves, so we come from our most real place. So others too can see who we really are, where we struggle, where we see them, this is how we commune with others in the most meaningful way. If we are being authentic, and others struggle with that, this is their feelings guiding them to their internal work...and so it

goes. Our job is to know what is ours and what is not, whilst still caring and empathizing with others. E.g. "If you don't call them, they'll think badly of you (me)".

How do I feel? Anger and guilt.

Notice urge to blame, then notice the pain rise.

What is the pain about? Being pulled from my values to appease another's needs.

Value choice with empathy –

"I can see this means a lot to you, but I would feel uncomfortable calling when they are your friends"

This of course could expand into a very negative response from the other person who now has to face their discomfort head on. Whether they are able to notice their feeling, avoid blame and make a value choice OR blame you as being a myriad of negative things, is down to whether they are willing to do their work. However,

your work is to be faithful to what is authentic and maintain empathic connection if the situation calls for it.

Like the example above, the world and others will often seem to disappoint. In reality, these feelings spring from the expectation of what others should do, or should appreciate about us, or should feel about us. Knowing ourselves deeply and choosing what we accept and reject for ourselves leads us to a more authentic self, in all its truth, which recognises when we fall into the trap of 'shoulds' and judgement to avoid pain.

In the end it is the willingness to see the truth of 'what is'. Owning the feeling. From here the work begins. If we are able to **separate the feeling from the need to be saved from it**, amazing change can take place.

Last month's puzzle solution:

1. A barber
2. Monday
3. True
4. A is the right answer
5. 7.5 (Sequence is proceeds + 4, ÷2, + 4, etc.)

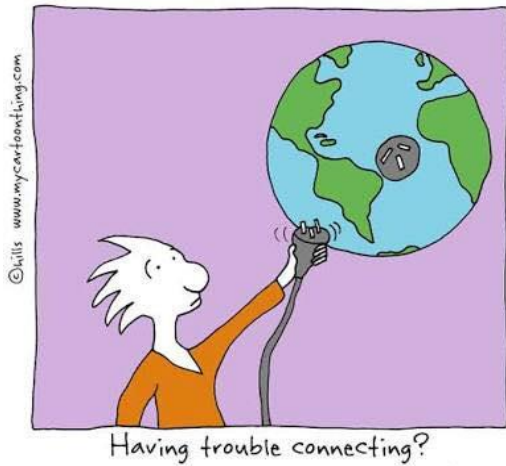
Test your deductive reasoning!

1. You have nine pigs. You must construct exactly four pens, with each containing an odd number of pigs. How would you do it?
2. A special force-field lets only certain objects pass through. Daffodils and hammers are allowed, but roses and wrenches aren't. What determines whether an item can enter?
3. A father is four times as old as his son. In twenty years, he'll be twice as old. How old are they now?
4. There is a small cabin in a forest. Inside are two dead men. The trees around the cabin are burning, although the cabin is not. The men had not been fighting and possessed no weapons. How did they die?
5. A man is looking at a photograph. His friend asks who it is. The man replies, "Brothers and sisters, I have none. But that man's father is my father's son." Who is in the photograph?

Good Luck!

Whom is the 'ouch' for? Part 4

BY Michael Cohn



before the judgment appears. This is the crucial point of awareness and it is called 'ipseity'.

Now, how do you feel inside?

"Who the hell ever heard of this word?", "Damn it, who's got time to wade through this"? etc. etc.

See if you are able to just hold the feeling of apprehension inside of yourself, just for a tiny moment, before you go into the judgments about stupid difficult words and idiot writers who make things hard!

If you do feel dismay, just notice this, and perhaps notice too your irritation at me for writing like I do. Loath me if you must, but try to stay away from names and judgments. Just feel the body-sensation.

The essence of becoming alive to oneself and to the world, is the ability, largely learned through mindful practice, of being in that moment of actual being – dropping into ipseity.

Here is some jargon.

Iipseity is a great little word – comes from the Latin 'ipse' meaning 'self'. It is a reflexive word folding back onto itself for emphasis, much like the English statements, "I, myself, saw him do it", or, "I hurt myself."

You find this root in 'solipsism', a composite of the Latin solus ("alone") and ipse ("self"), and but it now means something akin to egotistical – all about self. (Once it was applied purely in the philosophical sense, the theory that the self is the only thing that can be known and verified, but ignore that).

There is another word, ipsilateral which means 'pertaining to, situated on, or affecting the same side of the body' and comes from the Latin *ipsi-* comb. form of *ipse* itself, **the very one + lateral**] and what is of note is the emphasis on: "the very one" – the deepest, the core.

Now you can *really* feel anger – 'what is this tripe all about'?

Ignore the above 3 paragraphs but hang on a tiny bit more.

There is a significant distinction made between the narrative function of relating one's life story with words, and the direct

Whom is the 'ouch' for? Part 4

Last month, I seem to have drifted into a discussion of the real or authentic me and I left the post talking about where the 'real' me may be found.

In wondering where to go for this month's little blog, and suddenly it dawns on me to have a go at discussing how one goes about finding the 'real' me.

Before I write some more, can I ask you to take a few moments to try to 'feel' what you are feeling at odd times during this read?

So, what are you feeling now?

Maybe curious, or irritated, or excited. These are not strictly 'feeling' words but they will do for now. Try to notice that the 'feeling' part can be different to the judgmental part – the assessing part of 'good or bad', or 'stupid' or 'pointless'.

Maybe I'll start with a technical term now. As you are reading this, can you 'feel' a sense of dismay in yourselves – something that can be described as: "Oh shit, I hate technical jargon"!

If you can feel this felt sense, you have touched on something authentic. Now, the authenticity does not lie in the judgment "Oh shit, I hate technical jargon"! The authenticity lies in your being able to get to the authentic moment, immediately just

sensory experience of the moment. The ways in which our narrative function is shaped by the context of our telling (to others on to ourselves) reveals a profound difference that can obscure direct experience – the actual moment. This is more or less a direct quote from one of Dan Siegel’s books, “The Mindful Brain”.

What I will want to offer you in the next few posts, is a glimpse of how important it is to get to ‘that place of being’, versus all the stories around it.

One of the important books in ACT (Acceptance and Commitment) psychology – probably the big daddy of them all – is “Get out of your Mind into Your Life” by Steven Hayes.

In essence, this part of being in contact with your real self, always needs an implicit and continuous questioning – “Who are you? Your essence or your story about your essence”?

Have you ever asked yourself something like that?

What do you feel now?

NEWS

Jonathan Back - Sadly for us, and wonderfully exciting for him, Jonathan has been offered an amazing therapeutic role at a clinic in Zurich. Between his practice in Germany and travelling to Zurich, time doesn’t allow for his contribution to our newsletter. Michael and I wish him great success in this new adventure! We will miss his sage words and interesting input. However, for those who still would like to submit questions, please do so at info@meaningful-living.com.au and let us know if you would like a private reply or would be happy for us to share in the newsletter.

Coaching – Those interested in taking part in a coaching program to work through some life, work or relationships challenges which require decisions and change, please let Michael or Karina know or contact us at

info@meaningful-living.com.au

Have a happy and safe July everyone, Michael and Karina