



**MEANINGFUL LIVING**  
PSYCHOLOGY, LIFE COACHING & TRAINING

## *Non-judgment & authenticity – Friends or Enemies? By Karina Stell*

Part of the work we do is sitting without judgment with our clients. It is one of the fundamentals of our work. That clients can be authentic and not fear they will be judged is what allows them to open up and share the deepest parts of them. It is something I believe strongly in, that a client can feel unjudged and authentic in the presence of another human being wanting to understand. So if authenticity is fundamental, what about the authenticity of the therapist? Is it possible to be non-judgmental and authentic at the same time?

In the world at large, all human beings judge. It is part of being human. The key to growth and understanding is **noticing**. Sometimes in session, we therapists hear things that clash with our own value system. We may feel uncomfortable for a moment and there are two ways we can go. To judge or to be curious. You see, all actions put in the context of peoples own set of challenges and circumstances are understandable. Killing to protect your child, stealing to feed yourself, hating because you have been hated – it all is part of the intricate weave that influences who

each of us are and why we do what we do. It doesn't mean it is always easy to hear. If a child has been hurt by an adult, this is a place I struggle most. But some adults in their own torment do just that. It's challenging. Our job is to try and understand. That is the work we have chosen to do. Reflecting on this struggle is part of growing as a professional and as a human being. This is what it is to be authentic.

In a politically correct world, sadly people have become afraid to say when they struggle with issues in the fear of being branded with some label. What happens to their spirit when they can't be their true selves? It shrivels, and becomes shame laden and hidden. We all fear, misunderstand and struggle with life in some way. Therapy is a way of learning to be free to say who we really are, and a therapist who is committed to trying to understand how it is for you/us, is a gift.

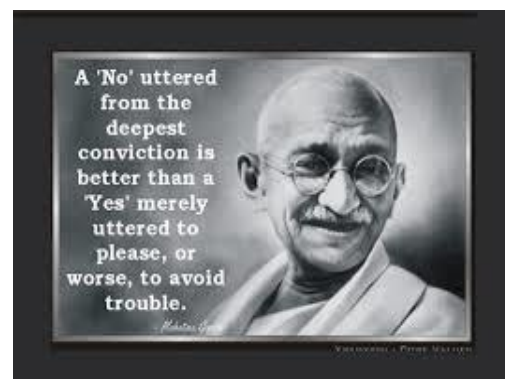
So to answer my initial question, I believe non-judgment and authenticity can be friends, can

# Meaningful Living Newsletter

Issue 15, February 2016

coexist. Noticing what is going on, being curious about how another's world is and understanding why something that may not make sense to me, makes perfect sense to them is part of what makes us all different and teaches us compassion.

In the therapy room, to be authentic a therapist can share that they are struggling with a place their client is coming from without being judgmental. This is the place to seek understanding, to inquire further, and to really notice the feelings that surround and underpin it all. This enriches both client and therapist.



## What I noticed.... By Michael Cohn



### That Sneaky Ego Part 2

Last month we left off with the first glimpse of The Sneaky Ego, the little bugger that pops up in a way it hopes can be seen as less palpable and somewhat gentler, but it's nevertheless about me, me, me.

More insidious and far less evident, The Sneaky Ego also shows up in a much subtler way - in a pseudo-modest, self-effacing sort of way.

Picture if you will, that you have taken trouble to carefully and tastefully prepare an exquisite meal for your guests. Someone might then compliment you for a wonderful feast and thank you for it. To which you might reply:

Say you give a musical performance to a crowd of people or just to friends, and people are deeply touched by the performance. They rush to tell you how they were moved during the recital, how your tonal expressions, interpretation, facial expressions and aliveness really moved them and how they loved the experience.

"Oh no", you say. "I really messed up the introduction and I made several mistakes in the exposition, and I could have done blah de blah de blah". "And I feel terrible because ...".

My, what a modest musician you are, and so knowledgeable too! You know what is good and not good in musical expression. So, not only is this the kitchen variety of false modesty mentioned above, but you have now managed to slip in as well just how amazing musically you actually are,

"Oh nonsense - it was nothing. I just threw a few things together for us to eat".

Here your ego manifests as false modesty - ('Oh, I'm not really so accomplished, and anyway, I feel embarrassed by your compliments),

My, what a modest and well-brought-up, unassuming, blah-de-blah person I am!

Except that you aren't.

It is still your needs over another's.

Someone has a need to thank you for the trouble you went to, and let you know how much they appreciate your effort and your ability. Take a moment to reflect and to notice perhaps that your guest has a very real need to express how much you and your efforts mean to them.

Your self-conscious mumbling 'Oh it's nothing really', is, in reality, a harsh flip-off of their feelings and needs. It is your needs above theirs – your need to appear modest. Your 'gracious' mumbling is, in fact, a 'fuck-off' to them in the face of your own feelings of shame and inadequacy and unworthiness and consequent attempt to seem 'modest'.

Your diffident and humble words totally invalidate who they are, and brutally dismiss and rebuff their needs of expression in the face of their own open sharing with you.

It gets worse.  
(theoretically if not in performance this one time).

Fuck-off flip off yet again. You have slapped the face of the person who has been so moved by your performance that they want to share that emotional moment with you. You might have said: "Thank you for saying that. It means a lot to me that you were moved by my playing and that you were touched by ...".

That would have been a gracious and caring response of someone focused on the needs of another, and whom you are willing to meet in a vulnerable place of intimacy.

Your fuck-off flip-off response is merely another way of saying two things really, one intentional and one inadvertent.

Intentionally you were attempting to salvage some lost 'dignity' or loss of face in having given a less than perfect performance. So here your needs trumped those of the person complimenting you.

More insidious in its effect and more pernicious in its damage, is the unintentional consequence of your fuck-off flip-off.

Your criticising yourself for your poor performance has, as already mentioned above, the kitchen variety effect of emotionally dissing the person complimenting you,

but it is also highly insulting to the person you are responding to.

You are, in effect, saying to that person: "You boor, you know nothing about music. It was such a shitty performance that if it actually moved you, it merely shows up what an unsophisticated and unworldly prat you are". "And, of course, it shows up against sophisticated and knowledgeable me, a dilettante of the highest order".

Next time you are given a compliment, be careful how you respond.

## Questions I've been asked ....



By Jonathan Back

### **Q. I've been struggling since I moved abroad, why is immigration so stressful?**

A. Since I moved to Germany and work with other expats, I get asked this question on a regular basis. For this newsletter, I would really like to share some of my own experiences.

Despite the fact that I have travelled to several other non-English speaking countries, I found moving to Germany to be a huge transition.

At first, I felt like a tourist. But as the dust settled I felt reluctantly forced to forge my own way, out of my linguistic and cultural comfort zone. It often felt (and sometimes feels) like walking beside a traveller at the airport. You might be walking at the same pace as the locals, but somehow lagging behind.

Immigration sits amongst relationship breakdowns, job loss and death of a loved one on the list of major life stressors. It can result in people feeling frustrated, alienated and incompetent. Initially, even the smallest daily chore like buying groceries can feel like trekking up a mountain. After the buzz of new surroundings wears off, comes a stark reality – I DON'T BELONG.

At the end of the day, we are all the same, no matter where we come from. The stress of trying to find our footing in a foreign work environment, the lack of

social and family support, and cultural misunderstandings may cause painful feelings, as well as a sense of feeling displaced, overwhelmed and disorientated.

Aside from the difficulties integrating into a new culture, immigration can also stir up the hornet's nest in other ways. As we are stripped of our usual distractions, friends and routine, old painful feelings may arise – feelings that might be part of the reason for moving to a different country in the first place.



You can submit questions to Jonathan via  
[Jonathan@meaningful-living.com.au](mailto:Jonathan@meaningful-living.com.au)

**Last month's puzzle solution:**

1. Two statements are false
2. No, because you would be dead
3. Are you asleep?
4. The third room. A room full of lions that have not been fed for three years would be dead.
5. 16

## Welcome to this month's puzzles!

**I. What do the following 5 things have in common?**

1. milk
2. soft drink
3. coffee
4. orange juice
5. beer

**II. Put the following buildings or structures in order of height, from the shortest to the tallest.**

1. shed
2. skyscraper
3. duplex
4. bungalow
5. typical camping tent

**III. What do the following animals have in common?**

1. cat
2. fox
3. raccoon
4. squirrel
5. mouse

**IV. Put the following inventions in order from earliest to most recent.**

1. radio
2. television
3. gramophone
4. telephone
5. telegraph

**V. What feature do the following words have in common?**

1. armchair
2. egg
3. imagination
4. over
5. understand

**VI. Put these bodies of water in order in terms of volume, from smallest to largest.**

1. lake
2. pond
3. ocean
4. brook
5. sea

**Good Luck!**

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