

Shifting Your Scripts

By Sandra Ford Walston

Learning advances when there's a shift in scripts. The scripts I am referring to are the mind patterns you bring to work. Scripts reveal a set of beliefs that you hold about yourself, how the world works (world view), and versions of them when under stress. Eckhart Tolle writes in the *Power of NOW* that they are "a part of normal living: The background static of perpetual discontent."

The scripts your boss displays set an example and create the "mood-receptivity" (not moody) for learning and achieving goals. This backdrop is felt subliminally by employees. Letting go of the handily stored spoken and unspoken scripts requires courage – the missing virtue in the workplace. The courage to confront those inner leadership beliefs sanctions a different thinking pattern. If you and your boss are to win and fulfill the company's strategy, then exploring how to observe and change scripts calls for reserves of courage (and probably a dose of vulnerability). Embracing the original definition of the word courage, meaning "heart and spirit" offers an opportunity to actively participate in this outcome. What do you equate courage with?

Courage will mean different things to people based on their level of development, such as taking a risk to admit a mistake or to admit a bad staff hire. Each employee, whether boss or subordinate, brings his/her definition of courage to work and what it means to exhibit courageous leadership. Courage will sometimes be demonstrated under duress by a few and witnessed by a slew of people, such as whistle blowing or saying what everyone else is thinking. Unfortunately, pure courage leadership is rarely learned or displayed by the majority, much less demon-

strated at the top. Courage leadership is deceptively simple. Does your organization allow you to share your thoughts and experiences candidly?

Your perspective on this issue is critical because you approach your organization with your viewpoint (script). Based on their upbringing and work experiences, each human spirit brings to work a world view that they perceive to be right. The adherence to a particular belief system, such as "Whatever we do it must be fair to everyone", "I'm getting too old for this...", "I'll never get ahead with this company as long as they...", or "The best way to manage people is to get tough and pound them (until apathy sets in)", stems from a predetermined belief or script. Scripts are the undercurrent that undercut courage leadership.

Gallup research today shows that 74 percent of American workers are disengaged clock-watchers who cannot wait to go home. Like bad personal relationships most of us blame rather than take action and move on. Do you dread going to work? Blame arrives in subtle and overt forms, such as "If I do this ..., then this...will happen (so what's the point)". To shift the "blame script" requires each person hold themselves 100 percent accountable for their affect on the organization's goals. Bruce is in the health care industry and he wrote: "When I demonstrate courage in the form of honesty, integrity, and sincerity, I experience the old adage 'he who has the power makes the rules' prevails. Not everyone where I work appreciates courage. So what's the point in being real if my honesty is not appreciated? The act of courage comes from being unwilling to take a defeatist attitude or blame. Instead, I choose to push the issue to upper management (knowing

Continued on **page 11**

You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself.

– Galileo



small attacks may be launched). I am accountable for my potential demise so I am prepared to interview someplace else.” Here he is willing to walk away from a career or group. Someone else may be willing to happily relinquish power to the group. Both perspectives expose a primary level of focus and the scripts that support the stance. Our day to day actions are driven by our set of beliefs such as who you trust.

This workplace example may reveal the script that Bruce is a courageous underling working for the non-courageous wimps. He continues, “Office politics often trumps my hand if all I have in it are courage cards.” His script experience is that honesty has its downside if the “rulers” of the organization are not open and receptive to their own scripts (the first task of the manager). One fact is for sure: Toxic ties at work cause suffering.

The opposite of courage is corruption – the inevitable hypocrisies that permeate the workplace (in addition to corporate scandals and battling egos). Most people do not want to know what they know. It’s easier to live in denial or sell your soul. Are you in charge of your life?

Five Tips To Redesign Old Scripts

1. Be willing to endure the anguish that comes with transitions. Psychologists suggest it takes three weeks to start breaking old habits, such as when you’re stressed over a project you bite your nails. Becoming an observer of your stories requires concentration. Placing judgments on peers is easier than turning the spotlight in strict honesty on one’s self. Eventually, you no longer avoid your patterns – you “own” them and you claim how they affect others. The tragedy for most people is that intentions, such as New Year resolutions never measure up. For

example, you may work in an environment that bleeds your heart rather than feeds it (clock watching). Ask: Based on the original definition how do you say no to courage?

2. Take action to implement this redesign. The script you learned a long time ago in your head becomes conditioned to a pattern that dictates your thinking and your behavior. For example, you might discover that your mindsets reveal how you tend to blame. Driving your day to day actions (or inactions), such as the conversations you choose to have or not have become outdated and don’t work anymore. Your courage meter comes in to play when you determine how you hold yourself 100 percent accountable for your actions. Ask: How do I hold myself accountable for my missteps and how long does it take for me to step up?

3. An act of “courageous will” is required to change, so pay attention. Make a decision to live your life by staying focused on when you’re happy. Analyzing yourself allows you to discover when you’re “being” (spirit) is in joy. Then, you can begin to sustain this feeling and enjoy being. Will you consent? If you are willing, transformation occurs as an organic process. It’s a simple process if the proper attention is applied. The GE Chairman & CEO’s 2004 Dartmouth commencement speech was not filled with “big” words or haughty comments. He said, “The challenge you must accept, right now, is to make yourself better every day...Your curiosity and desire to learn things on your own terms is really a key to success...You must have courage.” Ask yourself: If I had no limitations, what would I be doing?

4. Find someone you trust to share in a dialogue. To change

your cycle from mediocrity, struggle, or suffering can be a difficult process. People share with me that at times they feel alone (not lonely) on their journey. Finding someone you can share your progress with keeps the new intent alive, serves as a means of accountability, and supports you to raise your level of being present. Are you becoming the person you were created to be or just limping along? A colleague called me on the telephone to share a transformation in motion. His schedule for the day had four back to back appointments with a one hour drive in between each appointment. At that moment, he recognized an old script playing in his mind. His ego was whimpering “poor me” complaints in the form of “This is too much and I am getting too old to do this type of heavy driving day.” He continued, “Sandra, you’ll appreciate that when I invited my ‘observer’ to be in the now, I shifted my perspective and changed my script. I immediately released the tension in my shoulders and gazed off the road to notice the wonders and beauty of the unique Napa Valley.” This is a simple example of becoming more intensely present to attract a new circumstance. He was no longer identified with his scripts. Ask: How does your joy show up at work?

5. Declare your courageous intention. Commit to a period of time to live life deliberately, such as 60-90 days. Ask: How willing am I to summons my courage?

Sandra Ford Walston, The Courage Expert, is the originator of StuckThinking™ and an organizational effectiveness and learning consultant, speaker, corporate trainer, and Courage Coach. She is also the internationally published author of “Courage”. Her second book is currently agent represented.