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Trust Your Inner Compass

Another way of contributing to more peace in your life is to develop trust. Achievers are often seen as ruthless and hardnosed. This might be because many have had to fight hard for their ideas and goals every step of the way. There is always a tendency in this world to resist anything new – and achievers often take on launching projects that others consider daring or even reckless.

This is why many achievers need to learn that they don't always have to assume a fighting position. Using force is not the answer to every challenge in the world. Many times it will prove more beneficial to practice greater tolerance instead. Or greater patience. Or more *feeling*. It is crucial for achievers to take the time to also work on these qualities and so to approach inner peace and satisfaction. They have to learn that sometimes it's quite possible to achieve goals effortlessly – that it may even be counterproductive to just try harder. In my view, this is a question of trust.

Trust is a matter of believing that things will work out. A lack of trust can easily result in an exaggerated need to have every little detail under control, and this creates more anxiety than peace. I am the kind of person who often likes to be in control. I want to be in charge of what's going on in my life, and I've noticed that when things begin to take a wrong turn, my need for control increases.

Trying to maintain too much control can be disadvantageous. An exaggerated need for control is often the result of worrying about things going wrong, and this kind of worry can become self-fulfilling if we listen too closely.

It is better just to accept that it is not possible to control every little aspect of your life. Instead, you can exercise your trust by believing that things will work out no matter what. Fortu-

nately, this kind of thinking can also become self-fulfilling. It can cause things to start falling into place of their own accord.

Our need for experiencing the feeling of trust becomes greater during difficulty. Unfortunately, during such times our sense of trust sometimes vanishes. Things have a funny way of speeding up when we run into obstacles. Or at least it feels like things are speeding up. It's easy to get stressed and to start worrying. Our pulse starts to race and we start sweating more than usual. We can be affected in other ways too. In such situations, it is easy to lose faith in the idea that everything is going to work out, which inevitably makes the situation worse. This can lead you right into a vicious cycle.



I found myself in just such a vicious cycle the other day when visiting a pool here in Stockholm. As I was walking down the stairs together with Lotta, my personal assistant, I managed to slip. Several bathers close by were afraid that I would fall, so they tried to grab hold of me. They also gave me such instructions as how to hold the handrail and how to take one step at a time and how to calm down. I understand of course that they were just trying to help, but at the moment, I found it annoying. I felt that they were treating me like a child. Because of my annoyance, I had even more trouble walking, and this made them even more afraid that I would fall. The whole thing turned into a circus. I could even feel my breakfast preparing to make an appearance.

I wasn't able to maintain my sense of trust, mostly because I let the situation get to me. I also failed to calm myself down by meditating on my tree (a method of stress management that I describe in the section about attitude awareness). When I had gotten down into the water, I had time to think about what had happened, so that when I climbed the stairs out of the pool, it went just fine – even though the same pool guests were near the stairs. I didn't pay any attention to them and instead concentrated on maintaining my composure and my sense of trust.

I had been worried about slipping even before I walked down those stairs into the pool. The worry the other bathers were feeling was nothing more than a reflection of my own worry. I believe that we can gain much by regarding communication as more sophisticated than we normally believe. We give off many more signals about ourselves than we realize and are able to read each other in numerous ways. Consider how we can enter a roomful of people and sense immediately that something is amiss. Or consider how we just know sometimes that someone is looking at us before we see them doing it.

In other words, we communicate in many more ways than science is able to describe. Science has not yet created all the instruments it needs for measuring this, but science is ever developing. For centuries, the atom was believed to be the smallest indivisible unit, but these days scientists are talking about threads that run through you and me and that traverse the span of the universe. We are connected by these threads – you and me and everything else – and that makes it far easier to understand how we can communicate with each other only by thought.

The dividing line between energy and matter is disappearing, and it is becoming ever more common to look upon most things as both energy and matter simultaneously. This makes our perception of the world more dynamic. Scientists today assert that one particular particle can exist in two different places at once. Thoughts can be registered as electric energy, and so I don't find anything strange about such expressions as "The power of positive thinking" or "Prayer can move mountains".

If there is any truth to expressions such as these, then it is all the more crucial that we develop our ability to trust, especially when in the middle of difficult situations. By practicing trust, we send out completely different signals than if we give in to uncertainty and worry.

When discussing these newer theories, we should not forget the theory of synchronicity as

presented by psychologist C.G. Jung as early as the 1950s. Synchronicity means that two seemingly unrelated events can be related despite science's inability to describe the connection. Some call this coincidence. I might be thinking of a certain person just as the phone rings and it proves to be the person I was thinking about. Probably all of us have experienced this kind of thing.

I find it interesting that before long we will probably be able to explain such "coincidences" scientifically. For if science has said that everything is related to everything else, then we are just a step away from being able to say that what happens in one place can influence simultaneous events in an entirely different place. Since thoughts generate electromagnetic radiation, which moves at the speed of light, these thoughts can quick-as-lightning have repercussions in other parts of the universe.

If this is really how it works, then what we think is at least as important as what we do. This is why positive thinking can lead to favorable results and negative thinking can lead to unfavorable results.

As you think, so shall you be.

Trust is an essential ingredient in every relationship. When going through difficult times with another person, it is crucial to show that person trust. It is often a lack of trust that leads to difficulties in a relationship. Unfortunately, sometimes we feel the need to control other people, which is true in both our private lives and at work. If you are in a supervisory position, then you have definite reason to exert control over your coworkers, because you are responsible for the results of their work.

Your methods of exercising this control, however, may make a great difference. I can think of two distinct styles of control. You can either play the stern supervisor, overseeing every detail from over your workers' shoulders, or you can choose the role of coach, who remains in the background until your workers come to you for help.

I myself felt such an exaggerated need for control when I started employing my own personal assistants at the mid-80s. I wrote twenty pages describing my assistants' work duties and placed lists all around my house specifying how their assignments should be carried out. These lists outlined everything from how I wanted my bed to be made to how I wanted my breakfast prepared (see page 4).

This is an excellent way of distancing yourself from your workers and of showing who's boss. This leadership style builds mostly upon fear. You expect your workers to obey you without question, and they quickly begin to act like robots, without thinking for themselves and without taking initiative.

If this is the type of colleague you want in your company, then your company will probably not last long. We all understand that our world is going through changes more rapidly now than it ever has in the past. We therefore need to be able to handle a constant stream of new challenges. If your workers have to come to you with every little problem they encounter, you'll soon start wondering why you need those workers at all. Your company won't be quick enough on its feet. In order to create more flexibility in your organization, you will have to give your co-workers more room to think for themselves and to make their own decisions.

So you will realize that this stern leadership style does not work in the long run. This is what I have learned. Instead of continuing trying to maintain absolute control over my personal assistants, I began to demonstrate trust. This resulted in a more pleasant atmosphere and in my personal assistants doing a better job by thinking through their work on their own. They no longer behaved like robots. Naturally, this change took a good amount of time. Every time an assistant has returned after a longer absence, we have both noticed that my need for absolute control has continued to diminish.

I believe that one of the reasons we feel the need for control is because we are afraid of making mistakes. In certain matters I used to be a perfectionist and still am to some degree; I usually didn't allow myself to make any mistakes at all. This is why I expected others to be fault-free too and why in trying to prevent them from making mistakes, I exerted as much control as possible. Such an exaggerated need for control, however, only increases anxiety among your personnel. You end up finding that they make more mistakes than they would have otherwise.

The only remedy for this is to let your colleagues make mistakes. You have to understand that no one is perfect, not even you. What we need to do is capitalize upon our mistakes by letting them teach us what we need to learn.

Only he who can manage to do nothing can avoid ever making mistakes. – Vladimir Lenin

The man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything. – E.J. Phelps

Lack of trust can also affect relationships in our family life. One common example of this is parents trying to exert inappropriate control over their children. Many parents share the misconception that their children are their property and that they therefore have the right to make all decisions for them. This only slows down these children's maturation process.

A child that is treated like an individual with his or her own thoughts and desires has a much easier time making the transition to adulthood. Children are generally able to discuss things and to contribute their own opinions and observations from an early age. It is imperative that we do not squelch this ability. Studies have shown that adults in our society are spending less and less time with their children. These adults instead "park" them at the daycare center or at school, in after-school activities or in front of the TV or computer. I find this frightening.

It is easy to assume that this shortage of time with their children is what leads many parents to dominating this time with control rather than with trust. It is easier to say "Do as I say!" to a child than it is to take the time to discuss why a particular course of action should be taken.

If we spent more time with our children, I think we would start discovering just how capable they are at thinking things through. We would probably also discover how easy it is to come to agreements with children and how dependable children really are. If we would only show them trust, then they would also trust us.

What do you feel that you need to have control of in your life?

Have you met anyone with an exaggerated need for control?

Do you think that just trusting things will work out is dangerous?

How do we find the right balance?

Unfortunately, our relationships with children are not the only relationships we try to control. All too often we think of our romantic relationships in terms of ownership and control. Perhaps we forget that people change and so we unrealistically expect a relationship to be the same for all eternity. The truth is that because people do change, relationships are always in a state of fluctuation. Failure to realize this can be devastating.

Imagine a dance floor where everyone is moving but you. The dancers bump you around, and you might even be having a hard time keeping to your feet. The same is true in real life, especially now that so much around us is in a state of flux. This affects all our relationships and I

believe it contributes to the sense of instability we often experience in them.

In this respect, I believe that men have to be more careful than women. We have been more likely to think of our partners as controllable objects than women have. The long history of the oppression of women is still affecting relationships between men and women today. Because women demand more and more equality, we men are forced to make room for them. We have to understand that much of what we have learned earlier from our society is just not true anymore.

Men and women possess both what are considered typical male and female traits. It is usually considered a female attribute to be able to see a problem in its entirety and therefore to be able to consider several aspects of one problem at once. Men on the other hand prefer to focus closely on one part at a time so as to give each detail all the attention it requires. Neither method is better than the other. Rather, they are complementary. As the role of women in society changes, the female way of thinking will grow in importance. Women will want to see that we men also learn to apply this holistic approach. It is crucial that we keep up with these changes and also develop the ability to see things from such a perspective. Otherwise, we might just find ourselves left behind.

Men who refuse to adapt to these changes will probably try to exert even more control over women. Women who do not break free of these traditional roles will continue to be victims of this kind of oppression. Some of them may put up with this oppression because of the comfort they find in having a father figure to look up to. Men who do not develop attributes traditionally considered female will therefore most likely use their positions to continue oppressing women. Women who do not develop the corresponding male attributes will have to continue playing second fiddle.

Creating equality between the sexes is at least as challenging for women as it is for men. We often lose sight of this fact. Such things as loneliness and independence can be frightening for women, who have been raised to be more social than men and who learn to spend much time with others. Men usually do not become close to others in the same way. Men tend to be more frightened of closeness and of giving up their independence.

For men and women to communicate on equal terms, they must first unlearn the habit of building their relationships on control and learn instead to give each other trust and confidence. This is true in private life as well as at work.

Trust me!

Lists

Here are some of the lists I used to use at work and at home.

- 1 CHARGING THE BATTERY OF MY ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR**
 - * Take the cable from the bag under the seat and put it into the wall plug. When my electric wheelchair has been recharged, both lamps on the front panel under the seat will come on. Then you can pull out the cable and put it back in the bag.
- 2 BREAKFAST**
 - * Fill the bottles on the kitchen bench with sour milk (+ one and a half tablespoons of sugar) or with rosehip soup, put the tops on and put them on shelf E13.
 - * Make two sandwiches - one with brown bread (preferably full corn type) and cheese and one with white bread (but not packed sliced bread) and something else like sausage, liver paste or hamburger meat.
 - * Put the sandwiches in grease-proof paper in a plastic bag which is in drawer O5. Put the sandwiches on shelf E13.
 - * Put the bottle holders and the sandwich stand and the two straws on the kitchen table where I normally sit.
 - * Have a sandwich if you like – now or later. On me!
- 3 MORNING AND EVENING TOILET**
 - * Wash your hands.
 - * Put the neck support in position.

- * Shave me with the razor above the mirror on the first shelf.
- * Clean my teeth with Colgate and the pink toothbrush, start at the top with long strokes and then rinse with tap water.
- * Wipe off my mouth with toilet paper.
- * Wash my face with soap and washcloths - rinse with hand and throw the washcloths in the trashcan.
- * Remove the neck support.
- * Take off my pajama top by pulling it straight up above my head.
- * My hands should be washed without washcloths under the tap.
- * Wash under my arms using two washcloths, one with the soap and one without. Put a large towel on my knee and keep another underneath when you are washing me; once with soap and then three times without.
- * I like to use Bats deodorant.
- * Wipe the wash basin with toilet paper
- * Put everything away and close the bathroom cupboard.

4 WASHING HAIR

- * Adjust the pressure and temperature.
- * Put a large towel around my shoulders.
- * Take the shower and run it until the hot water comes.
- * I will lean forward and you can wash my hair with shampoo from the bathroom cupboard.
- * Rinse and dry my hair.
- * Reset the temperature and water pressure.
- * Wipe the wash basin with toilet paper
- * Brush my hair with the hair brush from the green pocket in the bag.

5 FOOT BATH

- * Set the right temperature to the left of the wash basin.
- * Take the red plastic bowl from the shower and fill it using the shower alongside the lavatory.
- * Put in some foot salts from the bathroom cupboard.
- * Put the plastic bowl in the shower with the short end facing the lavatory.
- * Reset the temperature.

6 ARRIVING AT THE OFFICE

- * Unlock the door using the key from pocket 4.
- * Take off my coat.
- * We then go to my chair.
- * Fold up the wheelchair and put it by the wall and get my bag.
- * Take off your coat.
- * Change our boots and put on shoes.
- * Put the diary on the desk at the left and open to today's date.
- * Fetch and open the post, throw the envelopes away.
- * Put documents from file Y in pocket 1 on the notice board and put file Y on the desk on the right.
- * Wash the drinking glass on the desk and fill it with fresh water.
- * Time for your own needs.

7 GOING HOME

- * Get yourself ready, except for putting on your coat.
- * Put the diary away.
- * Fill in the taxi coupon.
- * Change our shoes or put on boots.
- * Open up the wheelchair and place it at an angle outside the room, put the brake on and open the foot plate.
- * Put the post in the mailbox in the corridor.
- * Ring the taxi: 606700.
- * We go to the wheelchair.
- * Put on our coats.

- * You fetch the bag, close any windows that might be open, turn off the lights and lock the door.

**8 HOW TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF WHEN YOU MAKE PHONE CALLS FOR ME
(NOT TO SWITCHBOARD OR SIMPLE INQUIRIES OR ORDERS).**

1. Good morning! I'm calling on behalf of Bengt Elmén, or
2. Good morning! I'm calling on behalf of Bengt Elmén at STIL, the Stockholm Association for Independent Living, or
3. Good morning! I'm calling on behalf of Bengt Elmén at the board of the Social Assistant Service, or
4. Good morning! I'm calling on behalf of Bengt Elmén. I believe you left a message on his answering machine.

MY ADDRESSES (for ordering goods and so on):

HOME

Sothönsgränd 5
S-123 49 Farsta, Sweden
Phone +46 (8) 94 98 71

STIL

Garnisonen
Karlavägen 100
S-115 26 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone +46 (8) 783 38 84

9 GETTING HOME

- * Take off your coat.
- * Take off my coat.
- * We go to the office chair.
- * Take off our boots.
- * Put the bag in my room.
- * Put the diary and the Y file on the desk.
- * If there's no post on my desk, get it from the box in the exercise room and open the envelopes along one long side and one short side.
- * Wash out the glass on the desk and fill it with fresh water. Don't change the straw.

10 LEAVING HOME

- * Are you ready (apart from your outer clothes)?
- * Fill in a taxi coupon and check the number of coupons in the case (should always be six).
- * The documents in the top tray on the desk should be put into the Y file and then into pocket 1 in the bag.
- * The diary should be put in pocket 1 in the bag.
- * Call a taxi: 320000.
- * Hang the bag on the wheelchair.
- * Place the wheelchair so that the footplates point towards the kitchen and put the brake on. Fold down the foot plate.
- * Put on our boots.
- * Put on our jackets and scarves.
- * We go to the wheelchair.

11 MAKING THE BED

- * Roll up the curtains and open the window.
- * Shake the bedspread, the quilt and the pillow outside the front door.
- * Straighten the sheet and put my pajamas under the pillow.
- * Put on the quilt and tuck it in under the mattress (especially at the foot of the bed).
- * Do the same with the bedspread, silky side upwards.
- * Put the little white cushion on the bed.
- * Wash the glass on the desk and fill it with fresh water.
- * Close the window.

AT NIGHT

- * **Put the little white cushion on the black office chair.**
- * **Fold down the bedspread to half its size twice.**
- * **Fold down a triangular corner of the quilt.**
- * **Put my pajamas on top of the pillow.**
- * **Put on the bed lamp.**
- * **Pull the curtains right down.**
- * **Wash the glass on the desk and fill it with fresh water. Don't change the straw.**