Are Your Clients Living their Lives Backwards?

Allow me to share with you a story about a coaching client I know. Larry was a tremendous success by most standards. He had built a company from scratch that netted $5 million a year in bottom-line profit. He had all the houses, cars, boats and other toys that we usually equate with success. But no matter how well he did, no matter how much wealth or how many things he amassed, it was never quite enough. He somehow could not get over the persistent thought that he was a failure. There was little satisfaction in anything he accomplished. Throughout his childhood, if his report card showed all A’s and a B+, he would be disappointed for not applying himself more. He could still hear his dad scolding him, saying, “Come on, Larry! You can do better than that!”

It was the same story for everything he did. No matter what the accomplishment, the feeling of satisfaction was always short-lived. He would always find a way to invalidate himself, thinking it wasn’t that big a deal after all to achieve whatever he did. There was always another bigger, steeper, tougher mountain to climb. Once he climbed THAT mountain, he’d be happy. But after doing so, there was always little sense of lasting accomplishment awaiting him at the top. So, he’d be off looking for that next prize to attain — and then, surely, he’d be happy.

All too often, many of your coaching clients will measure the value of their lives by what they accomplish. They set their goals and conduct their life’s work with the intention of amassing the money, cars, homes, toys, and titles that they hope will provide them with the concrete evidence they feel they need to prove that they are valuable and that their lives have been meaningful. After years of struggle and with little satisfaction from the daily grind they’ve chosen, many may look back upon their lives with the hollow sadness that comes with regret.

Rather than gaining clarity about what is most important to them, they pursue the symbols of accomplishment. They too often will dishonor their most important values, often oblivious to what these values are. Far too many will live without passion and postpone finding joy in their days, hoping that the fulfillment they seek will eventually come one day following the
accomplishment of their goals. They convince themselves that one more achievement, promotion, or pay raise will provide them with the meaning in life they so desperately seek.

Too many tie their self-image to these accomplishments. Without them, they consider themselves to be unworthy, a failure, and unlovable. They seek to prove their worth to others by what they amass and what they accomplish. But this never seems to be enough, so they are driven to do more and have more. They fail to realize that they are already inherently worthy and a contribution to others simply by manifesting their unique, magnificent gifts. It is by being true to themselves, identifying their passions and living in harmony with their key values and in alignment with their life-purposes, that fulfillment and joy will result.

Support your coaching clients to realize that as a result of who they are and what they do, they’ll naturally have those qualities and things that provide them with a rich sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Their lives can indeed flow out of their declarations. No evidence is required. Empower them to act because of who they are and their actions will cause them to have those things consistent with who they are and what you do.

Here are some exercises to assist your clients in living life out of their declarations of who they choose to be:

1) In the different areas of their lives, challenge your clients to examine where they feel that they need evidence to be the person they have chosen to be.

2) Empower them to identify what their unique gifts to the world are and what they most contribute to others. Suggest that they focus upon their core values to direct their lives in harmony. Request that they create a list of the qualities that they desire to be known for. Challenge them to speak these qualities as an empowering affirmation, “I am a …” (Example: I am a fun, kind, compassionate, creative, and loving friend.)
3) Ask your clients about what actions they can take that are consistent with this declaration.
4) Have them record their invented declarations in their journals, listing all of the qualities they will be known for as well as the actions they will commit to that are consistent with this declaration.